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[Executive Vice President and Provost \(Office of the\)](#)

**Oversight Executive**

[Executive Vice President and Provost](#)

**Applies To**

Academic Division

**Table of Contents**

[Policy Statement](#)

1. [The Probationary Period on the Tenure Track](#)
2. [Annual Report on Promotion and Tenure](#)
3. [Institutional Qualifications for Tenure](#)
4. [Student Instruction](#)
5. [Research](#)
6. [Service](#)
7. [Institutional Qualifications for Promotion](#)
8. [Actions in the Office of the Provost](#)
  - A. [Affirmative Recommendations](#)
  - B. [Negative Recommendations](#)
  - C. [Final Action](#)
9. [Expedited Review](#)

[Procedures](#)

**Reason for Policy**

The assignment of academic rank and the award of tenure safeguard the University's intellectual standards, academic integrity, and academic freedom. Few decisions carry the degree of institutional importance or affect the University's future as much as those involving the promotion and tenure of academic faculty. The Executive Vice President and Provost has established criteria and processes related to the promotion and tenure of teaching faculty on the tenure track at the University.

**Definition of Terms**

**[Arms-Length Letters](#)**

Letters from outside references who do not have a relationship with the candidate. Examples of such relationships would be a former PhD advisor, a collaborator or co-worker.

**[Tenure or "Without Term" Election](#)**

An appointment to the faculty of indefinite duration. **With Term**

An appointment of a defined duration and end date.

## **Policy Statement**

Each school or division must have a written policy for promotion and tenure that reflects the standards of its disciplines and its own considered aspirations. Differences among disciplines are appropriate, indeed inevitable, but each set of standards must: be justified against an articulated mission, must establish procedures that assure their fair and reasoned application; and must be consistent with the policies and procedures outlined below.

Tenure-track elections are "with term" if there is a specified number of years for which the appointment extends under the employment agreement between the faculty member and the University entered into at the time of initial hiring or on a "with term" renewal. The complementary phrase "without term" is used to denote the award of "tenure." Faculty "with term" appointments and faculty "without term" appointments are subject to annual evaluations, a system of merit pay, and to appropriate sanctions, including suspension or termination of employment, in the event of unacceptable performance of duties.

### **1. The Probationary Period on the Tenure Track:**

The probationary period for tenure is the cumulative amount of time spent under term appointments while on the tenure track. In ordinary cases, it does not exceed seven years in full-time faculty activity; in the School of Medicine, it does not exceed ten years in full-time faculty activity. Tenure-track faculty are entitled to fair consideration for renewal and/or tenure, but there is no presumption of or entitlement to renewal or tenure by virtue of being on the tenure track. Rather, renewal and tenure decisions are individually determined in light of departmental, school, or University needs and appropriate standards. A candidate is entitled to fair consideration as measured by departmental or school needs and standards, in light of overall University objectives.

The probationary period may be extended beyond its ordinary term only if a written request by the faculty member has been approved in writing by the appropriate dean and the provost. Approval by the dean and the provost must be sought and provided in advance whenever possible. A leave of absence from the University does not extend the probationary period without such written request and approvals. Examples of circumstances under which "clock-stopping" may be approved include but are not limited to: (1) engagement in important public or University service, (2) maternity or family parenting, and (3) serious personal or family illness.

In cases in which the original term appointment is shorter than the period for tenure consideration, probationary faculty are entitled to adequate consideration of their potential for renewal for an additional term appointment and to advance notice that such consideration is to be given. They must have the opportunity to submit supporting documents as a part of that process. Ordinarily, the provost does not review decisions not to renew term appointments prior to the tenure review.

Faculty members in the probationary period who are not to be re-elected after the expiration of the term of their appointment are entitled to notice of non-renewal in advance of the expiration of the appointment as follows:

- For persons who are not to be renewed after more than two years of service: One calendar year. They are entitled to twelve months of employment after notice, regardless of when notice is given.
- For persons who are not to be renewed after more than one year, but two years or less of service: Six months. They are entitled to six months of employment after notice, regardless of when notice is given.
- For persons who are not to be renewed after one year of service or less: Three months. They are entitled to three months of employment after notice, regardless of when notice is given.

## **2. Annual Report on Promotion and Tenure:**

By February 1 of each year, the dean will report to the provost in writing on promotion and tenure recommendations arising out of his/her school on which action is to be taken for that academic year. The provost will specify from time to time what information the report should contain about the process, the candidate pool, and the candidates.

Unless the peculiar features of an individual case warrant a different approach and such different approach is authorized by the provost in writing, evaluations from qualified external referees on the qualifications of the candidate in scholarship, and (if appropriate) teaching and service, must be a part of a recommendation of tenure or promotion. The most helpful external evaluations gauge the impact of the candidate's ideas in their field. A short biographical sketch of each referee, together with a statement of his/her professional relationship to the candidate (if any) should be provided. Referees should be identified as nominated by the candidate or selected independently by the department, the school's promotions and tenure committee, or the dean. A copy of the request for an evaluation should be included.

It is important to the integrity of the process that the dean assume accountability for promotion and tenure recommendations. Decanal recommendations are to reflect the dean's own judgments on the substance, the process, and the recommended outcome. The February 1 report of the dean therefore must include the dean's affirmative or negative recommendation on each candidate for whom the promotion or tenure review process has been completed. All candidates considered by the dean should receive a written evaluation that summarizes the salient conclusions and judgments from dean's committee analysis, redacted to remove information that would reveal the source of confidential external evaluations. If the promotion or tenure review process has not been completed for a particular candidate because that candidate has withdrawn, the dean should so state and must ensure that a written withdrawal signed by the candidate is included in the candidate's personnel file.

## **3. Institutional Qualifications for Tenure:**

Definitions of the terms "teaching," "research," and "service" will vary from school to school, as will the expectations and importance assigned to each in the tenure decision. Schools must specify their interpretations of these terms in their written internal tenure and promotion policy and documents, as well as indicate, as objectively as is practical, how such activities are to be considered in the promotion and tenure process. Each school's standards and processes will be taken into careful account in the course of reviews carried out by the provost and his/her advisors, but institutional review will be conducted in the

broad context of the following criteria:

- Quality of, and commitment to, student instruction (including teaching, course design, course material, interaction with students outside of formal instructional periods, including advising and engaging students in research, scholarship and creative work with faculty, and other mechanisms of enhancing student learning);
- Quality of, and productivity in, scholarship, research, and/or creative activity; and
- Service contributions to the University, the profession, and the public.

#### **4. Student Instruction:**

An award of tenure will not normally be made unless there is evidence of both the candidate's sustained commitment to classroom instruction and the candidate's sustained effectiveness as a contributor to the intellectual development of students through devices such as course design, course material, interaction with students outside of formal instructional periods, and other mechanisms of enhancing student learning. The means of assessment of that contribution will vary with the field, with the level at which the teaching is concentrated, and with the degree of objectivity with which outcomes can be measured during the probationary period.

In schools that serve undergraduate students, separate attention should be focused on commitment to and effectiveness of undergraduate instruction. Student evaluations must be a part of the evidence in all cases, but by themselves they are not enough. Students are important judges of a teacher's fairness, organization, and personal qualities in the classroom, laboratory, seminar, or office; but the candidate's faculty peers are normally the better judge of the content of her or his pedagogy. Popular teaching and good teaching are not necessarily the same thing. Advising, availability to students, and other forms of beneficial interactions between the candidate and students may be given appropriate weight as a part of the "student instruction" criterion, but are not, by themselves, a substitute for accomplished classroom instruction or for other elements of the tenure standards.

#### **5. Research:**

While the standard may be discipline-specific and account appropriately for interdisciplinary work, there must exist a body of original research or creative work sufficient in quality and quantity to have led at least to the beginning of a national reputation in the candidate's field. There must also be strong indications of a commitment to original research or creative work that will lead to sustained contributions over time and to the judgment that growth in stature will continue. While external evaluations of the candidate's contributions to original research or creative work are a required component of a positive case for promotion or tenure, it is also required that the appropriate faculty unit and the dean make a careful and independent judgment that the quality and quantity of the candidate's scholarly output is sufficient to justify the recommended action.

#### **6. Service:**

Service to the University is an obligation of every regular faculty member. Service to one's professional discipline and, in a number of disciplines, to the broader public is important and sometimes essential in terms of job definition. The proportions of each will vary widely, however, not only from school to school and department to department, but among candidates as well. Quality and effectiveness of service are difficult to assess. The effort must nevertheless be made. In certain disciplines, strong external service can

appropriately be given substantial importance in the tenure evaluation process. And, in all schools, genuine contributions to institutional governance, through committees and otherwise, are a part of the obligations expected from faculty. Service is, therefore, a qualification for tenure, even though its relative expectation will vary. In no case, however, can it stand alone to justify the award of tenure nor can devoted service compensate for inadequate student instruction or research.

## **7. Institutional Qualifications for Promotion:**

A recommendation for promotion or a concurrent recommendation of promotion and tenure will generally be considered under the standards set forth for tenure recommendations. For promotions within tenure, each school for whom such promotions are contemplated must have written standards concerning the criteria for promotion, including guidelines as to when promotion is ordinarily considered (i.e., after how many years of tenured status). In general, the criteria for promotion within tenure are similar to those for the granting of tenure, except that there should be substantially increased attention to the candidate's (a) national prominence (with international recognition desired wherever possible) and (b) sustained demonstration of distinguished performance in student instruction, research, and service. As before, outside letters should be gathered in the assessment of scholarship, and (where appropriate) teaching and service.

An issue occasionally arises as to whether a different standard for promotion (not tenure) might be used to reward individuals who have significantly contributed to important University goals and missions and who have had distinguished academic careers, but whose work has not progressed or sustained itself sufficiently to warrant promotion under the standards of the prior paragraph, fairly applied. In rare cases, following a substantial period in rank after the award of tenure, a school may advance for approval the promotion of a tenured faculty member who has made distinguished contributions to the University over a sustained period of time that warrant special recognition outside the normal criteria for promotion. Promotion under this provision is to be reserved only for the rare situation in which a strong special case can be made. In no instance is length of service itself to be a sufficient criterion for promotion.

## **8. Actions in the Office of the Provost:**

The Executive Vice President and Provost of the University maintains a Provost's Promotion and Tenure Committee which is chaired by a Vice Provost. The Provost's Promotion and Tenure Committee reviews the files of promotion or tenure candidates referred to the committee by the provost and discusses its review of cases with the provost.

### **A. Affirmative Recommendations:**

Affirmative recommendations by the deans for promotion or tenure must be supported by adequate investigation, review, and written documentation. All affirmative recommendations will be reviewed with care in the provost's office. Those thought to warrant further discussion, whether on process or on substantive grounds, will be sent to the Provost's Promotion and Tenure Committee for further consideration and advice to the provost. A proposal for an outside hire without term must be made in essentially the same form as that employed for internal grants of tenure (refer to Section 9, [Expedited Review](#)).

Should the Provost's Promotion and Tenure Committee wish additional information on any case, that fact will be reported promptly to the dean. Each dean will be asked to discuss any cases from his/her school where the provost, in consultation with the Provost's Promotion and Tenure

Committee, has concerns regarding the substantive recommendation, the process used to reach it, or the quality and thoroughness of the written data gathered to support the recommendation.

**B. Negative Recommendations:**

Negative recommendations by the deans for promotion or tenure must be supported by adequate investigation, review, and written documentation. All negative recommendations at the departmental level must include written analysis supporting the recommendation and be reviewed at the school-wide level and by the dean. The report to the provost on such action should include the date on which the candidate was notified of the school's decision.

The provost will review all negative recommendations on promotion or tenure on process and substantive grounds. In addition, candidates may submit a written appeal within 30 days of being notified of the school's decision. For prompt consideration of appeals, deans must notify candidates of their recommendation no later than February 1. Appeals should be accompanied by adequate documentation and with a statement of reasons as to why the recommendation is believed to be inappropriate. In order to ascertain when the 30-day period begins, the provost requires that the dean provide the provost's office with a copy of the communication to any candidate that notifies him/her of the negative recommendation for promotion or tenure. The provost may refer such appeals to the Provost's Promotion and Tenure Committee for its consideration and advice.

Given the reality that promotions to full professor within tenure may occur at substantially different times, even within a school, and given the possibility of multiple considerations of such promotion over a career, there is a limit to the "appeal of right" to the provost in cases where faculty with tenure are denied promotion. Each school should establish a reasonable period within which promotions within tenure will ordinarily be considered. A person passed over for promotion one year may be reconsidered the following year. Appeal of negative decisions on promotion within tenure will be reviewed by the provost only if no previous request has been made by the same candidate within a five-year period.

Normally, the substantive judgments of the school on the quality of student instruction, research, and/or service will not be reversed when adequately supported and in accordance with University policy.

**C. Final Action:**

As soon as practical after the February 1 deadline (or after a special promotion or tenure action has been initiated), the provost will report to the dean the results of the promotion and tenure reviews at the provost's level and will forward approved recommendations to the president and, with her or his approval, to the Board of Visitors for action.

**9. Expedited Review:**

Whenever possible, faculty promotion and tenure or new faculty hires should have tenure status reviewed or granted through the processes described above. When this is not possible and a rapid decision to hire with tenure is needed or a retention counter-offer with promotion and/or tenure must be made quickly, an expedited review may take place in accordance with the procedures described below.

## Procedures

### 1. Expedited Review Procedures:

These procedures make it possible for faculty review to be completed in a compressed time period; they are not intended to bypass normal review processes.

Promotion and tenure review requires:

- in schools with departments, departmental faculty review,
- chair recommendation to the dean,
- school-level faculty review,
- recommendation from the dean to the provost, and
- review by the provost's committee.

In expedited review, the chair and dean may appoint a sub-committee consisting of no fewer than three faculty members who are members of the department or school promotion and tenure committee or who usually participate in these decisions. The subcommittee reviews the nomination and provides the chair or dean with a decision in no more than three days. Once the provost receives the dean's recommendation, the provost reviews the nomination and makes a decision as quickly as possible, generally within two weeks.

Materials submitted in a dossier for expedited review should be similar to those normally included in a promotion dossier, including a complete, detailed curriculum vitae. Three outside, arms-length letters, are acceptable, provided they address the candidate's suitability for the faculty rank and tenure. A candidate's cover letter or research plans may substitute for the usual statement in the dossier. While it is not necessary to include letters from UVA faculty colleagues or students, it is essential to include evidence of the faculty member's teaching effectiveness. A summary of teaching evaluations from the University or the prior institution, teaching awards, and other documentation may provide evidence of effective teaching. Incomplete dossiers will delay review.

**Major Category** [Executive Vice President & Provost Policies](#)

**Next Scheduled Review** Friday, October 6, 2017

#### **Revision History**

Updated 10/6/14.

#### **Applies To Text**

Academic Division (Tenured and Tenure-Eligible Academic Faculty).

#### **Policy Summary**

Criteria have been established for the renewal of term appointments, award of tenure, and promotion (up to and including the rank of full professor) for all schools or divisions that report to the Executive Vice President and Provost of the University (the provost). Teaching faculty in units that report to the provost, who have been elected by the Board of Visitors and who are on the tenure track, are governed by this policy.

#### **Supersedes Policy Text**

Promotion and Tenure Policy 3/1/2000

**Last modified** March 12, 2024 - 11:26am

**Approved By** Executive Vice President and Provost

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