

How to Present an Effective Dossier to the Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee

The Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (“APT Committee”) is the third level of faculty review of promotion and tenure decisions. The APT Committee, composed of 12 faculty members, makes recommendations to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, who makes the final decision, subject to confirmation by the Board of Trustees. These guidelines are provided to Department Chairs and Deans in an effort to ensure that dossiers are presented in as effective a manner as possible.

Recommended order of documents

- Form Ap-2
- CV (most recent version—dated)
- Dean’s letter
- Chair’s letter
- Internal committee report, if submitted
- Sample solicitation letter for outside letters of reference
- Outside letters of reference
- Any other necessary material, including teaching evaluations if appropriate

Ap-2

Make sure the dates of all prior appointments are correct.

CV

Preferred order – in every subhead, reverse chronological, most recent first

- Personal
- Education
- Professional Experience
- Honors
- Bibliography – on all items, show author order
 - Books and Chapters, including pages
 - Refereed papers/articles, including pages
 - Refereed unpublished oral presentations and/or abstracts
 - Other unrefereed works, including book reviews
- Teaching record
- Grants (source, type of grant, role on project, starting and ending dates)
- Professional Service:
 - To discipline
 - Within UNC-Chapel Hill

Additional Information

- Research Statement
- Teaching Statement
- Focus and brevity are appreciated in both the research and teaching statement; these should generally not exceed five pages. Both should include a short statement of future plans.

Dean's Letter

- Or signed endorsement on Chair's letterhead
- Must show the vote of School's Tenure and Promotion Committee.
- Attach any document produced by School's Tenure and Promotion Committee.
- Should address any articulated concerns reflected in negative votes by School's committee or full professors.
- Need not, and should not, reiterate the Chair's letter.
- From Schools without departmental structure, the Dean's letter should incorporate the Chair's letter (information specified below).

Chair's Letter – The Most Important Recommendation

The Chair's letter should clearly show the considerations influencing the Chair's decision to recommend the candidate for tenure and/or promotion. The Chair should also frankly discuss any of his or her misgivings, reflected in negative votes or abstentions by any member of the department, or noted in any of the letters of reference. Open discussion of misgivings gives the Chair's ultimate decision much more credibility than an unalloyed letter of praise when the dossier indicates that some people have misgivings. If the Chair quotes from a departmental committee report, it should be attached.

The letter must show the vote of the full professors: yes, no, abstain. If departmental policy calls for taking votes of other ranks, they should be reported also. Discuss any known or suspected reasons for negative votes or abstentions. (Abstentions are perceived as mildly negative votes.) State whether voting is closed (secret ballot) or open.

Discuss the research/scholarship career thrust, strategy and emphases of the candidate.

- Is there a clear path?
- How has it changed over time?
- What is the most promising outcome you can foresee for the scholarly trajectory?
- How does that trajectory mesh with departmental strategy and needs?
- What is the current national and international visibility and standing of the candidate?

Set the entries in context.

- Explain departmental standards and expectations for scholarship, teaching and service.
- Explain the importance, percentage of articles accepted, and relative standing of the journals in which the candidate has published.
- If the discipline is one of the rare ones in which certain conferences outrank the journals, explain that.

Discuss the research record in some detail.

- Explain relative roles in multi-author works, especially when multiple works have the same co-authors.
- Indicate the significance of author order, since disciplines differ radically in their customs in this matter.
- Indicate which items report work done as part of the candidate's dissertation, and which work has been done since joining the UNC Chapel Hill faculty.
- Indicate the relative weight of any publications completed by the candidate before joining the UNC Chapel Hill faculty.
- Note any external evidences of excellence of particular works: best paper awards, favorable reviews, high citation counts, etc.
- Insist that the status of unpublished works be precisely stated. *In press* means the work has been accepted without further revision and has left the author's hands; give the anticipated date of publication. *Accepted and under revision*, *submitted*, and *in preparation* all have precise meanings. *Under contract* does not; it must be supplemented with a clear indication of the state of completion.
- For books, indicate the standing of the press. Explain the relative importance of books versus articles in your discipline. Discuss the importance of textbooks and edited volumes in your discipline.
- If your field is one in which grant success is a common external measure of research quality, discuss the candidate's success in obtaining extramural funding (other than UNC Chapel Hill grant awards).

Letters of Evaluation

- A minimum of four letters of evaluation are required: all four from outside the institution, all from individuals independent of the candidate, two from a list of names provided by the candidate and two from individuals selected by the Department Chair or Dean, as appropriate. Ideally, all of the letters should come from Research Institutions.
- The purpose of these letters is to provide an independent and unbiased assessment of the individual's national and international reputation. Therefore, the request from the Department Chair or Dean to prospective writers of outside letters of evaluation should be phrased neutrally and should not solicit an affirmative response or recommendation. A copy of the letter requesting an evaluation of the candidate should be included in the dossier. The letters may not be from individuals who have been directly involved with a candidate, e.g., a collaborator, mentor, previous co-worker, former dissertation chair, etc., but may be from individuals who know the candidate through professional interactions, e.g., reviewed the candidate's publications or served on review committees together.
- In addition to the minimum four required independent letters, any number of additional letters from any source may also be submitted. These may be from individuals within the institution with whom the candidate has collaborated or from former colleagues, collaborators, mentors or other individuals connected with the candidate.

- All letters of evaluation that are received must be made an official part of any appointment, promotion, and tenure package and must be part of the evaluation process of the candidate under consideration.
- In the appointment/promotion packet, each outside letter should have a designation in its upper right hand corner indicating whether the writer of the letter was suggested by the candidate or was chosen by the Department Chair or Dean.
- The letter to outside reviewers should include the following statement: "Under current policies of this institution, peer evaluations, such as that being requested from you, are regarded as confidential within limitations imposed by law. They are for limited use within the University. However, North Carolina state law provides that such written evaluations become part of the personnel file of the individual. As such, they become open by petition to the faculty member about whom they are written."
- You are required, by rule and ethics, to include all the letters you received, not a selected subset.
- Explain which referees were solicited from the candidate's list and which were selected by you without any suggestion from the candidate.
- Tell any personal connection between candidate and referee, e.g., dissertation advisor, post-doc mentor.
- Explain why each referee was selected and the standing of each referee in the field, especially those of rank other than professor or from institutions that might be considered as lower rank than Carolina.
- Please don't quote extensively from the several letters; a few-sentence summary of each is in order.
- Quoting just favorable sentences out of context hurts your credibility – APT members read the letters as well as your summaries of them.
- A sample letter soliciting an external letter of recommendation is found at the end of this document.

Teaching and Service Record

- Discuss the teaching record, especially all assessments of teaching effectiveness.
 - Include any quantitative data from student evaluations, and discuss trends over time.
 - If you have a procedure for gathering non-quantitative student comment, report the results of that process.
 - Do not, however, provide input from selected individuals, as opposed to broad categories of students.
- Discuss the service record. The importance of service varies from unit to unit. Explain its role within your school or department, and discuss the candidate's service record.

A final word of advice for chairs to give to candidates

The dossier will be read by many people; tell them what you would want to know if you were reviewing it. Be straightforward in your recitation of achievements, but omit the puffery, such as talks at your department's colloquium. Openness breeds respect; any perceived attempt to manipulate excites challenges.

SAMPLE REQUEST FOR AN EXTERNAL LETTER of RECOMMENDATION for A TENURE-TRACK POSITION

Dear _____:

The School of/Department of _____ at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is reviewing the qualifications of _____, for promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure (or Associate to Full Professor with tenure, or Associate without tenure to Associate with tenure). The School/Department will base its recommendation concerning _____ on the value of his/her research, teaching, and service. I write to seek your opinion about _____ worthiness for this promotion. To aid in your review of his/her qualifications and contributions, his/her *curriculum vitae* and most recent and (according to him/her) most important publications are enclosed.

We are particularly interested in placing _____ scholarly work in a national context. We would value, therefore, your evaluation of the importance of his/her area of study and of the significance of his/her contributions to it. We are also interested in your opinion of his/her stature relative to his/her peers nationally.

Please refer to the following criteria of the School/Department Tenure and Promotion policy in giving your assessment of _____. [List criteria here]

Appointments or promotion to the rank of Associate Professor must demonstrate outstanding ability. The candidate must demonstrate outstanding scholarly contributions, show independence and leadership in research or practice, and have a growing national reputation in his/her area of expertise.

For promotion to the rank of Full Professor the candidate must continue to demonstrate high quality teaching, make outstanding scholarly contributions, and have a national reputation in his/her area of expertise. There must be strong evidence that his/her scholarly work has stimulated the work of other researchers or practitioners, has provided "breakthroughs" in the field, and that, in general, other scholars are paying close attention to the candidate's work.

In addition to the above, we would appreciate your comments concerning _____ collegiality and interpersonal skills, organizational citizenship, and other relevant observations to the extent you are able to provide them. We would also appreciate knowing whether you would recommend _____ for this promotion at your university (or organization). Please explain the reasons for your opinion.

Under current policies of this institution, peer evaluations, such as that being requested from you, are regarded as confidential within limitations imposed by law. They are for limited use within the University. However, North Carolina state law provides that such written evaluations become part of the personnel file of the individual. As such, they become open by petition to the faculty member about whom they are written

(A final paragraph of thanks, the deadline, whom to contact for further information, etc.)

Sincerely,