

Process for Probationary Evaluation of Assistant Professors in the Department of Horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

The following policies and procedures are intended to demystify and facilitate the process for successful promotion of assistant professors. They were developed in accordance with University of Wisconsin-Madison Faculty Policies and Procedures for faculty appointments and established practice of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Horticulture.¹ Amendments to Faculty Policies and Procedures after the date of this document may supersede some aspects of this document.

Chapter 7 of Faculty Policies and Procedures:

<https://secfac.wisc.edu/governance/faculty-legislation/>

Biological Sciences Divisional Tenure Guidelines:

<https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/biological-sciences-divisional-committee/>

Tenure Guidelines Checklist:

<https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/biological-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/>

This document is provided to Assistant Professors by the department chair or the mentor committee chair during the first year of appointment to the faculty.

1. Expectations of and Guidelines for Assistant Professors Seeking Tenure

- a. For tenure being sought on the basis of research excellence, the development of an independent research program and productivity as evidenced by publications in significant peer-reviewed publications are of particular importance. Scholarly publication will also be an important consideration in tenure decisions involving faculty seeking tenure on the basis of extension excellence.
- b. For tenure being sought on the basis of extension excellence, evidence of leadership and examples of effective program impact will be of particular importance.
- c. Letters from leaders in the candidate's field attesting to the quality and excellence of on-going research work and accomplishments, or

¹ *Extension faculty should become fully aware of the Guide to Documenting and Evaluating Excellence in Outreach Scholarship

<https://secfac.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2017/06/Commitment-to-the-Wisconsin-Idea.pdf>

providing positive assessments of innovative and effective extension programming.

- d. Demonstration of excellence in teaching by a) student evaluations and b) peer evaluations.
- e. Documentation of the ability to obtain competitive research grants.
- f. Invitations to present lectures and seminars, or to organize and participate in workshops at other universities and national in international meetings.
- g. Evidence of contributions to the national scientific community, such as service on scientific grant review panels, membership on editorial boards, and participation in national professional organizations as a member or officer.
- h. Evidence of contributions to the Department, College, and University as evidenced by performance of committee duties at these levels.

2. Guidance Committee and Reviews

- a. Each assistant professor and the chair of the Department of Horticulture shall establish a guidance committee for the assistant professor within 6 months of appointment. The guidance committee shall serve to fulfill requirements of FPP 7.05.
- b. Guidance committee shall consist of a minimum of 3 tenured professors. It is preferred that at least one-half of the members be from the Department of Horticulture.
- c. Chair of the committee shall be from the Department of Horticulture and also serve as a member of the promotion screening committee during annual evaluation of the respective assistant professor.
- d. Composition of committee members can be changed at the request of the assistant professor in consultation with the chair of the Department of Horticulture.
- e. Guidance committee meetings shall be held a minimum of once a year. The guidance committee chair is responsible for calling and organizing meetings.
- f. Format of guidance committee meetings will consist of assistant professor presenting her/his progress, future plans, and relevant

issues to promotion. Guidance committee members offer verbal feedback at this time.

- g. A written document reflecting each meeting will be drafted by the chair of the guidance committee for review and approval by committee members. Each summary will identify key goals point-by-point to be reached during the coming year and reflect impressions of the committee members and the candidate on progress of the candidate towards meeting promotion goals. Goals should be sufficiently general to allow the candidate to pursue new opportunities that add value to the program without detracting from its focus. It is also understood that goals may change over time and these changes should be reflected in the evaluation. The assistant professor shall also be allowed to comment on the draft document. The final document shall be submitted for approval and signature by the department chair, guidance committee chair, and the assistant professor. The final approved document is given to the respective assistant professor, guidance committee members, chair of the Department of Horticulture, chair of the Department of Horticulture Promotion Screening Committee, and filed in the permanent record of the assistant professor. Disagreements or differences of opinion may be provided in a supplement document filed with the report.
- h. Chair of the promotion screening committee shall prepare a summary evaluation from all guidance committee annual written evaluations reflecting impressions of the assistant professor during the probationary period. The final summary evaluation from the chair of the promotion screening committee shall be included in the final promotion document of the assistant professor for the promotion decision by the Department of Horticulture and divisional committee. The divisional committee guidelines call for a letter from the department's internal oversight committee.

3. Annual Evaluation

- a. Assistant professor progress will be evaluated annually by the Department of Horticulture Executive Committee (FPP 7.05 D).
- b. The Department of Horticulture promotion and screening committee shall serve as the oversight committee for assistant professors.
- c. Dates and time line for annual evaluation will be established by

the chair of the Department of Horticulture and/or the Department of Horticulture promotion screening committee. This timeline is shared with the assistant professor as early as possible.

- d. The promotion screening committee will prepare a draft evaluation of the assistant professor's progress toward promotion. The assistant professor will be given a draft of the evaluation for comment at least twenty days prior to the Department of Horticulture Executive Committee meeting to discuss action for the respective assistant professor. A draft evaluation (revised to reflect comments of the faculty member) is given to the assistant professor and chair of the Department of Horticulture at least seven days prior to the meeting date. This (revised) draft evaluation is made available to all members of the Department of Horticulture Executive Committee.
- e. The promotion screening committee and the department chair may meet with the assistant professor to enhance review at the request from any of the three parties. Information for evaluation will come from guidance committee summary document(s) and annual professional activity reports of the assistant professor.
- f. The (revised) draft document from the promotion screening committee is presented at a meeting of the executive committee of the Department of Horticulture. The assistant professor may attend this meeting to answer questions. The case is evaluated by the executive committee of the department and a draft of the final evaluation is prepared in conjunction with the chair of the promotion screening committee and the chair of the Department of Horticulture and given to the assistant professor for comment. The chair of the department will finalize the evaluation, give a copy to the assistant professor, and file a copy in the permanent record of the assistant professor.

4. Reference Selection for Promotion Deliberations

- a. The candidate is requested to submit a list of up to 10 potential arms-length evaluators to the chair of the promotion screening committee. The list shall include contact information and a brief description of each evaluator's qualifications, including her/his national or, if the evaluator is 100% outreach/extension, regional recognition. The candidate may also note additional potential evaluators who may not be at arms length.
- b. The executive committee of the department and the guidance committee are also asked to submit names of individuals

considered appropriate referees to the chair of the promotion screening committee.

- c. The promotion screening committee chooses at least 8 individuals, at least five of whom are arms-length reviewers, from the combined lists from whom to solicit letters.
- d. It is understood that letter writers are not to be contacted by the candidate prior to the granting of promotion for any purpose involving the letter of reference. All inquiries from outside reviewers, including inquiries to the candidate, should be referred to the chair of the promotion screening committee.
- e. Request for solicitation of letters of reference comes from the chair of the Department of Horticulture. The letter requesting evaluations shall closely follow the wording indicated in the recommended letter appended to the Biological Sciences Divisional Executive Committee's tenure guidelines

<https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/biological-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/>

- f. It is customary for promotion packets to include letters of evaluation that are not arm's length when the evaluators have first-hand knowledge of the candidate's work. Solicitation of letters of reference from colleagues at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, or in-state colleagues, or collaborators with the candidate will be sought in an identical manner, however no specific number of such letters is required.

5. Renewal/Promotion Document Preparation, Presentation and Vote

The following points are made to clarify the provisions of FPP 7.07.-7.13. for tenure-track faculty in the Department of Horticulture.

- a. Time-line for submission of appointment renewal or promotion documentation shall be established by the promotion screening committee and guidance committee members. After 2 or more years of continuous service as a tenure-track faculty member, notice to renew or nonrenew a contract (either for a 3 year renewal or tenure), shall be given at least 12 months before the expiration of the appointment. Thus, documentation for a 3-year contract renewal should be submitted to the promotion screening committee no later than 22 months following the appointment date. Documentation for promotion to associate professor shall normally be submitted to the promotion screening committee early enough

in the 6th year of the probationary appointment so that a decision can be reached by the divisional committee no later than the end of the 6th year of the probationary appointment.

- b. Tenure clock extensions are possible and should be utilized whenever appropriate as described in FPP 7.04. and UWS 3. An approved leave of absence is not included in the counting of probationary service (see FPP 7.04.E.). Part-time appointments may have different time requirements as outlined in FPP 7.04.D.
- c. Content and drafts of the promotion document shall be developed by the assistant professor in consultation with the promotion screening committee consistent with campus guidelines. The renewal document shall be prepared in a format consistent with divisional guidelines for the promotion document, however, no external letters of evaluation shall be required.
- d. At least one member, usually the chair, of the assistant professor's guidance committee may participate in evaluation and edit of advanced drafts of the promotion document.
- e. Promotion screening committee members will review and edit advanced drafts of the promotion document.
- f. The chair of the Department of Horticulture shall send the promotion document for external review to selected referees seeking letters of evaluation.
- g. Promotion screening committee will formulate its recommendations of the promotion case after evaluation of external letters and the promotion document.
- h. The initial motion to discuss the promotion case shall be brought to the executive committee by the promotion screening committee (see FPP 7.07.B.) Guidelines and timelines for evaluation and promotion shall follow FPP 7.07. The individual is allowed to participate to answer questions posed by the executive committee.
- i. Chair of the guidance committee shall present the respective renewal/promotion case to the executive committee of the department. This may include the history of guidance committee meeting outcomes.

- j. Discussion of the renewal/promotion case shall occur in accordance with FPP 7.07.C.
- k. After discussion, the promotion screening committee shall be asked to present its recommendation.
- l. Discussion of the renewal/promotion case shall resume in accordance with FPP 7.07.C.
- m. The executive committee shall vote by paper ballot whether or not to recommend renewal/promotion. A majority of those quorum members voting will be sufficient to carry the question; abstentions will be ignored and not counted in the total vote. Absentee votes may not be cast for decisions of promotion.
- n. Regardless of the decision and commensurate with FPP 7.07.D., the faculty member concerned will be notified in writing of the decision of the departmental executive committee within five working days. The notification must state that the faculty member will be given, upon request, the specific reason(s) for the decision in writing and a reconsideration of the case. Additional guidelines and timelines for succeeding activities are described in FPP 7.07.E. and 7.08.
- o. Renewal/promotion recommendations will be forwarded to the dean of the college by the department chair.
- p. Guidelines and timelines for situations of nonrenewal will adhere to FPP 7.07.D.-7.13.

Posted 12/8/2006; Combined with "Expectations of and Guidelines for Assistant Professors Seeking Tenure in the Department of Horticulture," adopted in May, 2016, links updated August 2020.