

University of Alberta

Faculty of Science

Criteria for Merit Increments, Tenure and Promotion

Approved by

THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Faculty Council

24 MAY 2012

Revised 27 May 1993

Revised 25 May 1995

Revised 17 May 2005

Revised 24 October 2006

Revised 20 April 2011

Revised 26 April 2012

The complete text of the document entitled
Criteria for Merit, Increments, Tenure and Promotion
is available on the World Wide Web at

<http://www.science.ualberta.ca/FacultyAndStaff/eFECAnnualReport.aspx#RelatedInformation>

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Introduction

Under the terms of the Faculty Agreement, the Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) is required to periodically review guidelines used in determining the award of merit increments, tenure and promotion. Such a review must take place at least every ten (10) years. Any guidelines developed by the FEC must be approved by the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Faculty Council prior to implementation.

The Faculty Agreement provides for the procedures to be followed in determination of the award of merit increments, tenure and promotion. Particular attention should be drawn to the following clause of the Faculty Agreement:

13.42 "All decisions of FEC are by majority vote of the members present and eligible to vote."

This document was approved by the Faculty of Science Faculty Council on 26 May 2011 and a decision was also taken by Council to make the effective date of this document be 1 July 2011.

I. Criteria

A. General Criteria

The Faculty of Science has traditionally used performance in research, teaching and service in arriving at recommendations regarding the award of merit increments, tenure and promotion.

Achievements in research and teaching should be deemed, in general, of greater importance than service. Competence in service should also be considered in judging an individual's overall performance.

A high level of professional conduct will be expected of all faculty members at all times.

This document describes in detail the principles to be followed in evaluating performance in these three (3) areas.

B. Research and Scholarly Activity

The creative function of the University requires faculty members to devote their time to research and scholarly activity.

There are many measures of the excellence of research and scholarly activities. Evaluation of the achievement of a faculty member in the area of research and scholarly activity will use the following criteria:

- Refereed publications:
 - quality and quantity of published work in refereed journals or other refereed venues;
 - citations in the literature implying a new idea or an important work.
- Non-refereed publications:
 - books and monographs;
 - chapters in books and/or review articles;
 - scholarly/technical reports.
- Technical contributions:
 - computer software or hardware that advances the state-of-the-art;
 - patents where the invention is of a scientific or technical nature.
 - Training of highly qualified people:
 - supervision of graduate students;
 - supervision of PhDs;
 - supervision of undergraduate students;
 - supervision of technical staff.
- Invited presentations:
 - invitations to deliver addresses at national-international conferences, summer-winter schools, workshops and/or other institutions.
- Peer group recognition that may take the form of:
 - election to office or committees in national-international scholarly professional organizations;
 - editorship of books or journals;
 - service on conference committees;
 - invitations to consult;
 - invitations to evaluate or review work of others;
 - invitations to membership of grant selection committees or other national committees;
 - awards in recognition of the excellence of scholarly work;
 - election to well-known and respected scholarly societies;
 - invitations to chair sessions at national-international conferences or symposia.
- Research grants and contracts:
 - award of research grants and contracts.

C. Teaching

One of the major functions of the University is to transmit knowledge. This function cannot be considered in isolation from the function to search for knowledge (research). An effective teacher has to be able to stimulate the intellectual inquisitiveness of the students by bringing to their attention the latest research findings and professional debates in his/her discipline. Thus, teaching effectiveness is linked with research and scholarly activity. An effective teacher not only transmits knowledge but helps the students develop skills to critically examine and evaluate ideas and arguments and, eventually, to generate ideas of their own.

The concept of teaching is not confined to classroom instruction but includes such items as participation in the supervision of laboratories, seminars, colloquia, tutorials, individual and group discussions, supervision of graduate and undergraduate students, and the development of innovative teaching methods.

In evaluating the effectiveness of a faculty member as a teacher, some of the attributes to be considered are his/her ability and willingness to:

- organize and present lectures at a level appropriate for the course;
- communicate effectively with students;
- stimulate intellectual inquiry and to foster learning in the students;
- present the latest research findings and debates in the discipline (where appropriate);
- make himself/herself available to students;
- participate in activities related to teaching such as advising students in selecting courses and assisting them in defining their long-range goals (see also 'Service');
- produce textbooks of high quality and have them published;
- develop and update course materials (lab materials, course notes, etc.); and,
- teach courses at various levels.

D. Service

The functions of the University and professional bodies require that, at sometime or other, the members of the faculty engage in activities outside the scope of research and teaching. These activities may include:

1. Service to the Community at Large

Such service can be considered by FEC when it requires special academic or professional expertise. These activities include the transmission of scientific knowledge to the lay public. For example, interviews and articles in the news-media, operation of facilities visited by the public, contribution to continuing education and special programs, and professional services to schools and colleges, may be considered.

Another important category of service to the community at large is providing advice to governments or other organizations acting for the public good, on science-based policy or other scientific matters.

Service to the community is intended to include general service related to scholarly activities and interests. In general, any science-based service with a demonstrable impact on society is regarded as service to the community at large.

2. Service to the Professional Community

Such activities include the participation on committees in professional organizations, e.g. grant selection committees, and organizing committees for conferences and workshops, editorship of journals, refereeing for journals and conferences, and reviewing research grant/contract applications.

3. Service to the University Community

These services involve participation on committees at various levels within the University community, such as GFC, GFC standing and ad-hoc committees, Faculty and Department committees. Some of these activities are inseparable from teaching functions, particularly student advising. It is to be recognized that whereas all faculty members should be able to advise students in the choice of courses and their long-term goals, certain members of the faculty are appointed as student advisors and bear the brunt of these duties.

Another form of University service is mentoring and coaching other staff, including mentoring Assistant Professors to tenure.

Faculty members can also serve the University community through leadership roles in preparing large-scale grant applications (e.g. CFI, NCE) or nomination packages for major national and international awards, through activities related to commercialization of research results and/or technology transfer, and through participation in activities related to fundraising, development, and/or alumni relations.

4. Service to Developing Countries

Activities in assisting developing countries to establish a research/teaching base may be recognized in awarding merit increments, tenure or promotion. International development activities cannot be delineated very clearly among the three functions: research, teaching and service. However, if the work is clearly of use in assisting governments or scientists in developing countries to set up instrumentation, departments, laboratories or development programs, it should be recognized as service to the international community. If the activity demands that the individual spend some time in the developing country to train and engage scholars in research activities, it should be regarded as both research and teaching activity.

E. Supplementary Professional Activity (SPA)

SPA includes consulting or contractual professional work performed by a staff member beyond the primary obligations to the University, including employment in any capacity by another employer such as paid teaching at another institution or pay received from another source during a sabbatical leave.

SPA during the reporting period shall be reported on the staff member's annual report, and will be taken into account by FEC in the evaluation of performance for its decisions on annual merit increments, tenure, and promotion.

II. Evaluation of Criteria

A. Research and Scholarly Activity

Of all the criteria listed, the one used most extensively, and generally the most reliable, is the quality and quantity of published work in refereed venues of international stature.

Impact factors and/or acceptance rates of refereed venues are useful measures of venue quality; however, it is the responsibility of the Chair of the Department to evaluate, through consultation with his/her colleagues and the use of expert opinion in the field, the quality of the research and scholarship of an individual.

It is also the responsibility of the Chair to make a judgment (and be able to defend it) as to what constitutes a full-refereed paper. For example, a manuscript that is rigorously refereed in its entirety and appears in a prestigious refereed conference proceedings or edited volume may qualify as the equivalent of a full journal paper. However, a published conference abstract or a manuscript that is only informally refereed in its entirety would not be considered the equivalent of a refereed journal publication.

A scholarly/technical report to a private or government agency, published or unpublished by that agency, may be considered as a publication where the evidence of rigorous peer review is provided. Care must be taken to avoid double counting of scholarly/technical reports or invited talks if either is subsequently published in refereed journals.

Extensive citation of a paper is usually a measure of the importance of the work although a lack of citations does not necessarily reflect on the quality of the work. The use of citations has to be made with care since the number of citations obviously depends on the size of

the scientific community in the area of research. Some excellent published works wait to be 'discovered' and recognized as important by workers in a field. It is recognized that citations can also reflect negative opinions of a paper.

In the case of joint authorship of papers, every effort will be made with the assistance of the Chair of the Department concerned to assess the value of the individual's contribution to the team effort.

The authorship of a book, though a time-consuming activity, does not necessarily imply research activity as such. A senior level book, to be used at the graduate level or as a reference book, generally demands considerable research effort. The quality of the book, just as the quality of other published work, has to be determined and one measure is obtained from post-publication reviews by experts in the field.

The award of sustained and increasing research grants from a peer-reviewed body (for example, NSERC, CIHR, and SSHRC, etc.) may also be a measure of the quality of research carried out by an individual. However, care must be taken not to compare grant values across disciplines or sub-disciplines.

Invitations to deliver scholarly talks or major addresses to one's peers are a measure of leadership in the field.

Peer recognition, which takes various forms (see 'Criteria'), is also a measure of scholarly achievement.

B. Teaching Activity

There are several ways for a Chair to judge effectiveness in teaching, such as:

- assessment by students through a questionnaire and/or commentaries (see Appendix I);
- direct assessment by the Chair, or a designate, of teaching delivery;
- peer assessment of teaching delivery;
- assessment, by the Chair, or knowledgeable colleagues of lecture content, assignments, examinations and other course content;
- assessment of the success of mentoring and/or supervision of graduate students, undergraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and technical staff;
- assessment of participation and communication effectiveness in seminars, colloquia, and meetings;
- assessment of instructional materials produced by the staff member;
- reviews by administrative officials; and,
- assessment, by the Chair, of the extent to which the educational goals of the department are met.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to present evidence of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness using the above as a guide.

C. Service Activity

The Chair shall make every effort to assess the effectiveness of the service provided by the individual to each of the different communities.

In assessing the value of service activities all reasonable efforts shall be made to secure information on the success of such operations from the relevant sources. For service to developing countries, for example, an obvious source would be the appropriate authorities in the host country. Another possible source of information would be an umbrella organization (UNESCO, for example) under whose cover the project was carried out.

In assessing accomplishments in the area of International Development the difficulty of the circumstances under which an individual has to work must be considered.

D. Supplementary Professional Activity (SPA)

SPA can be regarded as meritorious to the extent that it represents professional development of the staff member or otherwise directly contributes to the university's goals of having tangible positive impact on society. Refer to the Faculty of Science "Guidelines for Supplementary Professional Activities and University Industry Relationship" document for reporting and procedural details related to SPA.

III. Merit Increments

A. General Statements

The merit increment has to be earned through meritorious achievements and is by no means an automatic right of the individual or based on the years of service. The award of merit increments is primarily based on an individual's performance during the twelve-month period defined by the Annual Report required in the Faculty of Science. Past performance, regardless of how praiseworthy and meritorious it may be, does not give an individual the right to a merit increment every year in perpetuity.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to provide information on the staff members' activities using the guidelines from Section II.

At times, circumstances make it difficult to assess an individual's research activity in a twelve-month period. This may happen, for example, if an individual must develop intricate instrumentation, experimental apparatus, or a software package. Such activities may at times result in no refereed publications, even though

such activities are imperative and indispensable for the future success of the research. In such cases it shall be the responsibility of the Chair to satisfy the committee that the individual is involved in 'development' work of considerable importance. In addition, other indicators of research activity would be expected to be documented.

In cases where performance over several years merits more than a single increment but not one and one-half, it may be appropriate to award more than a single increment.

The committee must judge the overall performance of an individual without assigning any numerical weights to each activity. Individuals who have reduced teaching loads due to research chairs, awards, or other assigned duties, will not be penalized for having a lighter teaching load. However, they are expected to demonstrate good teaching quality in the reduced number of courses they teach and are expected to achieve higher levels of appropriate research/service productivity than individuals with regular teaching loads.

B. Research

The best, and most reliable, evidence of research activity is the publication of research papers in refereed journals, conference proceedings, books and book chapters during the reporting period. Works under preparation or papers submitted for publication must not be considered in the award of merit increments for the year in question. Refereed contributions that have been accepted for publication, but have not yet appeared may be considered if the Chair has proof of acceptance.

Other evidence of continued research activity is provided by the individual's participation in national/international conferences/workshops and the presentation of papers at these conferences/workshops.

Invitations to present seminars/colloquia at other universities and talks at national/international conferences may also be recognized as evidence of merit and leadership in the chosen area of research.

Award of a sustained research grant from a peer-adjudicated body is to be accepted as peer recognition of the value of research carried out by the individual.

C. Teaching

Courses taught and the teaching load and effectiveness as a teacher are to be considered in the award of the merit increment. Where the Chair makes the case for meritorious performance based on effectiveness as a teacher, documentation must be provided.

D. Service

The service of the individual to the community at large, academic, university and international community will also be considered. Where this service has been of exceptional merit, proper documentation will be provided by the Chair.

Peer recognition through, for example, election to scholarly societies, national/international committees, grant selection committees of peer-reviewed agencies such as NSERC, CIHR or SSHRC, or award of Prizes, Fellowships or Scholarships, or any form of award in recognition of the quality of research or service will be given consideration in the award of the merit increment.

E. Sabbaticals

In a staff member's application for a sabbatical leave, he/she is required to describe the activities that will be undertaken during the leave and the scholarly outcomes that the activities are expected to generate, and in the sabbatical report submitted after the leave has finished, the actual activities undertaken and outcomes accomplished are to be described. These two documents are as important as the annual report itself in determining the merit of a reporting period containing a sabbatical leave. The staff member is expected to have executed the activities described in the sabbatical application, or the deviations from those activities that were explicitly approved in advance by the Dean, and to have accomplished outcomes commensurate in merit with those described in the application.

If the sabbatical leave occupies only part of the reporting period the normal expectations and criteria for research, teaching, and service are applicable to the portion of the period for which the staff member was not on leave.

IV. Tenure

Tenure is not the right of a staff member on completion of the probationary period but must be earned through effectiveness and competence in the three (3) areas outlined in Section I.

The individual must have produced sustained high-quality research and demonstrated continued effectiveness as a teacher during his/her career. There must be a high probability of eventually reaching scholarly standards and maturity expected of a Professor of Science.

The service component of the candidate's career will

not be a major issue in granting tenure, but the candidate must have demonstrated that he/she is capable of contributing effectively to service activities. Willingness to participate in the committee structure within the Department will be considered an asset. The candidate is expected to contribute to the overall welfare of the department. It is not expected that an untenured staff member will participate in the Faculty or the University committee structure.

As the granting of tenure commits the University for the rest of the individual's academic career, the decision must not be made in haste. The full duration of the probationary period to the date of consideration should be utilized to assess the past performance and the future promise of the individual. Tenure before the expiry of the probationary period must be limited to exceptional cases. These exceptional cases may result from such outstanding performance that the candidate's quality and promise is beyond doubt, or from prior academic, government or industrial service provided that an accurate evaluation of performance can be obtained from academic peers. A one-year extension to the probationary period will only be granted when there is significant evidence that the individual will meet the criteria for tenure by the end of the extension year.

1. Evaluation

The individual is expected to take an active part in research and scholarly activities, as evidenced by research publications in refereed venues of international repute, active participation in national/international conferences or the authorship of books or book chapters. The research productivity must be sustained and steady. An individual with a poor research record will not be granted tenure.

Teaching is to be evaluated as described in II-B and, in addition, on the basis of a one-page statement by the staff member on his/her teaching philosophy and experience.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to provide a carefully documented case of the quality of the individual's teaching using these criteria as a guide. An individual with poor teaching/mentoring effectiveness will not be granted tenure.

It is expected that the service aspect of an Assistant Professor's duties will be kept to a minimum to enable him/her to establish an effective research and teaching program. Willingness to participate in the service functions of the Department would be considered an asset.

The Chair of the Department is responsible for

providing complete documentation on the individual's whole academic career, including the publication record, grants/contracts, teaching competence, research supervised and administrative service as detailed in Sections I and II of this document.

Confidential letters of reference from authorities in the field of research must be sought to ascertain the quality of research and future promise. The opinion of knowledgeable tenured colleagues within the Department may also be sought regarding the individual's competence and contributions. Evidence from both students and peers (testifying to the individual's teaching effectiveness) may also be provided. Finally, information about the individual's engagement in some of the necessary functions, both academic and administrative, within the Department may be provided.

V. Promotion

A. Promotion from Associate Professor to Professor

Promotion to the rank of Professor is based on the individual's performance in the three (3) areas outlined in Section I. Promotion is neither automatic nor based on the number of years of service.

In considering promotion, the individual's whole record of achievement, to the date of consideration, in each of the three (3) areas is to be scrutinized.

No particular numerical weight or formula can be attached to any of the three (3) areas but, in general, excellence in research and teaching is to be considered more important than service. For promotion to professor, the staff member must demonstrate a strong record of achievement in research, teaching and service and either excellence in research and/or teaching, or, in rare circumstances, exceptional service.

B. Promotion Based on Excellence in Research and/or Teaching

1. Criteria

The individual must demonstrate high quality and mature scholarship as evidenced by international recognition of research contributions.

The individual must demonstrate competence in teaching at all levels, and demonstrate excellence in teaching or mentoring at the undergraduate or graduate level.

The individual must have contributed significant service to the Department, the University and/or professional organizations on the national/international level.

2. Evaluation

Promotion to Professor requires evidence of scholarly achievements and effectiveness in teaching commensurate with the academic staff in the Faculty who have attained the rank of Professor.

The evaluation of the quality of research and scholarship will be done according to Sections II-A and II-B. In promotion to the rank of Professor, confidential letters of reference must be obtained from international experts in the field testifying to the quality of the individual's research and his/her national/international stature. Opinions of knowledgeable colleagues (i.e. Professors) within the Department should also be sought and, where appropriate, from colleagues in other departments.

Evidence of teaching effectiveness must be based on information from both students and peers. For the criteria of effectiveness in teaching see Section I-C. The individual must include in the promotion submission a one-page statement describing his/her teaching achievements.

By this stage of the individual's career, significant service to the professional community at the national/international level should be demonstrated.

The individual should have participated in the committee structure within the Department, and/or the Faculty and/or the University.

C. Promotion Based on Exceptional Service

1. Criteria

Promotion to full professor based on exceptional service is reserved for those rare cases where an individual's service activity has required significant continuous time commitment resulting in a substantial reduction in time available for research and teaching for an extended period. The service provided by the individual during this period must have been exceptional in its quality and resulted in significant positive impact, and the individual must have demonstrated strong leadership at a senior level.

The individual's record of scholarly achievement must demonstrate high quality research, mature scholarship, and competence in teaching and mentoring at all levels.

2. Evaluation

The evaluation of the quality of research and scholarship will be done according to Sections II-A and II-B. In promotion to the rank of Professor, confidential letters of reference must be obtained from international experts in the field testifying to the quality of the individual's research and his/her national/international stature. Opinions of knowledgeable colleagues (i.e. Professors) within the Department should also be sought and, where appropriate, from colleagues in other departments.

Unlike the evaluation of research when promotion is justified on the basis of "excellence in research and/or teaching", this evaluation may focus on the individual's research and scholarship prior to beginning the extraordinary service, which should be judged in comparison to peers at that career stage and not at the time they were promoted to Professor.

Evidence of teaching effectiveness must be based on information from both students and peers. For the criteria of effectiveness in teaching see Section I-C. The individual must include in the promotion submission a one-page statement describing his/her teaching achievements. Unlike the evaluation of teaching when promotion is justified on the basis of "excellence in research and/or teaching", this evaluation may focus on the individual's teaching and mentoring prior to beginning the extraordinary service.

Opinions will be obtained through confidential letters of reference from individuals who are best qualified to judge the demanding nature of the service, the exceptional quality of the service performed by the individual, and the leadership demonstrated by the individual.

VI. Other Ranks

A. Faculty Service Officer (FSO)

For further information, please refer to the *Standards of Performance and Procedures for Merit Increments, Continuing Appointment and Promotion for Faculty Service Officers (FSOs) Document*.

VII. Appendix I

A. Policy on Teaching Evaluation

- a. A teaching questionnaire will be completed for each lecture section, in compliance with General Faculties Council regulations.
- b. The questionnaire will be administered through the Chair's office and the instructor will not be involved or present during the process.
- c. The results of the questionnaire will be provided to the instructor only after the final grades for the course have been submitted.
- d. Written comments are to remain confidential between the Chair and the instructor and will not be directly available to FEC. The Chair may present a synopsis of the written comments to FEC.
- e. Results of the teaching questionnaire will be used by the Chair in preparing the Chair's recommendation to FEC and by FEC.

B. Questionnaire

The questionnaire will consist of ten required Universal Student Ratings of Instruction questions. The Universal Student Ratings of Instruction questionnaire shall use the rating scale Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree to gather responses to the following questions:

1. The goals and objectives of the course were clear.
2. In-class time was used effectively.
3. I am motivated to learn more about these subject areas.
4. I increased my knowledge of the subject areas in this course.
5. Overall the quality of the course content was excellent.
6. The instructor spoke clearly.
7. The instructor was well prepared.
8. The instructor treated the students with respect.
9. The instructor provided constructive feedback throughout this course.
10. Overall, this instructor was excellent.