American University
Department of Biology
Guidelines for Tenure & Promotion

The goal of this document is to outline the criteria for reappointment, tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, promotion to Professor, and Term Faculty promotion in the Department of Biology. These criteria expand upon the minimum standards set forth in the University’s Faculty Manual and reflect some of the instruments and metrics available for evaluating a faculty member’s body of work as a scholar-teacher. The successful faculty member must demonstrate excellence in both scholarship and teaching; excellence in one will not make up for deficiency in the other. Meaningful service to the department, the university, and the community at-large is also expected from a faculty member with increasing responsibilities over time. Progression from reappointment to tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, and to promotion to Professor should be marked by continued excellence in teaching, accumulation of high quality scholarship, and substantive service to the department, the university, and the broader community.

Scholarship

Evidence for quality scholarship will be comprised of three major peer-reviewed components: publication record, external funding support, and external reviews.

Publication Record

Publications should primarily consist of refereed journal articles. In this regard, the candidate, especially in pre-tenure service, is encouraged to target high quality peer-reviewed journals in their field as the predominant outlet for their scholarly work. Quantitative measures of publication quality and impact are now readily available and are an important metric for assessing the quality of a candidate’s scholarship. Prior to the tenure and promotion decision, the candidate should have established a consistent record of publication in top-quality journals within their field. Participation at conferences is recognized as a critical part of professional development, but in itself will not be considered in assessing scholarship quality. Although books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed conference proceedings are legitimate outlets for scholarship, the lack of tools for quantifying quality and impact make evaluating them problematic and hence less informative relative to journal articles. Similarly, publications in dictionaries and the popular press, reviews of textbooks, and trade magazine articles will rarely provide useful information when assessing the quality of an individual’s scholarship.

To be promoted to the rank of Professor, the faculty member must present a sustained and continuing record of excellence in scholarship and be nationally and/or internationally recognized within his or her field of expertise. A highly regarded book or book chapters may be used as evidence of quality and impact in one’s field. In this case, indicators of quality and impact may include the reputations of the publisher, the series, and contributing authors.

External Funding

External funding from peer-reviewed sources, particularly highly prestigious sources, is an indicator of scholarship quality and is a general requirement for tenure and promotion in most cases. For this reason, the candidate is obliged to seek external funding even when it may be possible to publish without it. Pre-tenure faculty should target significant external funding to support research, including salary, graduate student stipends, and supplies. To support a

Final; adopted 8/10/15
productive research program, all faculty should actively pursue external funding. For tenure and promotion, a faculty member should have been awarded at least one substantial grant from a nationally recognized and competitive source. Depending on the degree to which external funding is commonly available in a candidate’s subfield of specialization, the candidate may have a number of smaller grants that may, in totality, constitute substantial funding in lieu of the availability of larger funding sources. Faculty seeking promotion to the rank of Professor are also expected to obtain at least one significant competitive grant from a national funding agency as an Associate Professor, and are encouraged to compete for training or meetings grants in addition to research grants.

External Evaluations

The use of external evaluators within the candidate's field of expertise will serve as an important gauge of scholarship quality. More specifically, comments pertaining to the candidate's publication venues (journal quality), productivity, and overall contributions to the field will be given the most weight in judging scholarship.

The date of submission of the file for action to the departmental rank and tenure committee is the last relevant date for reporting publication of scholarship, other than updates regarding publication acceptances of materials already referenced in the file (as provided in the CFA’s “Instructions for Submitting Files for Action”). Emphasis is placed on work completed while at American University and candidates are expected to provide evidence of continued intellectual productivity post-tenure and/or promotion, as stated in the Faculty manual.

Teaching

Excellence in teaching is evidenced by students who are actively engaged in learning, have developed competencies in their core discipline, and have acquired critical faculties for understanding not only advances in their own fields, but also significant work in related disciplines. Members of the faculty in CAS-Bio are expected to challenge students, engage them in critical analysis and provide timely, fair and objective assessment of their performance. Because “excellence” is not easily captured by any one measure, evidence will be sought in a variety of ways including:

- Student evaluation of teaching (SETs).
- Engagement with students outside formal classes, such as mentoring student research projects.
- Teaching materials such as course syllabi, assignments, and examinations that serve as evidence of a well organized, rigorous, and professional approach to teaching.
- Classroom visits and peer evaluations from colleagues.
- Comments by faculty colleagues who have shared classrooms or served together on thesis committees.

SETs, although imperfect, are an important indicator of teaching effectiveness. In general, a comparison will be made between the faculty member’s SETs and the average scores achieved by Biology faculty and also by faculty from across the College of Arts and Sciences. At a minimum, SETs should be comparable to scores received by others in the department teaching similar types of courses. Becoming an excellent teacher is an ongoing process and a new faculty member may need to build a record of teaching excellence. The faculty member is encouraged to
consult the departmental Rank and Tenure Committee and Chair regarding his or her overall development as teacher. A record of continued post-tenure teaching excellence will also be expected for candidates seeking promotion to Professor.

Service

Any academic institution flourishes by blending a variety of abilities, interests, and commitments. Indeed, the Biology Department regards service as an important aspect of professional development. A strong record of service will be required for a positive outcome in reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions. However, we also recognize that service obligations should be minimal for pre-tenure faculty and grow in scope post-tenure, where more service outside of the department or outside AU will be expected of candidates for promotion to Professor. An outstanding service record will not make up for deficiencies in other areas. Service to one’s professional societies is also encouraged, particularly in the case of candidates seeking promotion to Professor, but only to the extent that it does not compromise teaching and scholarly activities.

Term Faculty Promotion (Assistant Professor/Associate Professor/Professor Track)

With respect to the guidelines for promotion to Associate Professor outlined in the teaching and service sections of this document, the same criteria will apply for promotion of term faculty on the aP/AP/P track. A strong and consistent record of teaching excellence will be expected of term faculty, as evidenced by the same measures outlined above for tenure-line faculty (i.e., SETs, engagement, teaching materials, classroom visits, comments from faculty colleagues, etc.). Term faculty will also be expected to provide significant service contributions at both the departmental and college levels.

Given that term faculty in the Department of Biology 1) are encumbered with a significantly heavier teaching load than tenure-line faculty, 2) lack a research laboratory of their own, and 3) are sometimes restricted from submitting grant proposals to fund their research, the scholarship criteria for promotion of term faculty differs from that of tenure-line faculty as outlined below.

Publication Record

Although term faculty typically do not have their own research laboratory at American University, multi-year candidates on the term Assistant Professor/Associate Professor/Professor track are expected to continue their scholarship through off-campus collaborations or through collaborations and/or arrangements with faculty on-campus. Candidates will be evaluated primarily with regard to their record of publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and, to a lesser extent, their presentations at scientific conferences. The publication record of multi-year candidates on the term aP/AP/P track should look very similar to that of tenure-line faculty, but extended over a longer time period. In other words, the quality of research (e.g., publication venue, impact on the field) is expected to be roughly comparable to that of tenure-line faculty, but with a reduced publication frequency to account for the significantly higher teaching demands (six course load) of term faculty.

External Funding

Term faculty members are not expected to apply for or procure external funding for promotion, but any success in obtaining such grants will be viewed very favorably.

External Evaluations
The department will follow university guidelines with respect to the solicitation of external letters in promotion cases involving term faculty. If external evaluation is the university norm, the solicitation letter from the Biology Rank and Tenure Committee will make it clear that the candidate has no laboratory space, is on a six-course teaching load, and is not expected to submit external grant proposals. Negative comments that arise from evaluators' lack of awareness of the distinction between tenure-line and term faculty will not be considered in the promotion decision.