

**American University  
Department of Biology  
Tenure and Promotion Guidelines for Tenure-Line Faculty  
Revised June 2020**

The purpose of this document is to outline criteria for promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure, and for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, in the Department of Biology. These criteria expand upon the minimum standards set forth in the American University *Faculty Manual*. This document also outlines instruments and metrics used to evaluate a faculty member's body of work as a teacher-scholar. In evaluating a candidate's file for action, emphasis will be placed on work completed while at American University.

**I. Criteria for promotion and tenure**

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 all faculty members. Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure, and promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, should be marked by continued excellence in teaching, accumulation of high quality scholarship, and sustained service to the department, the university, and the broader community.

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 Department strongly encourages the candidate to seek significant external funding to support research, as appropriate to their subfield and needs.

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 or internationally recognized within his or her field of expertise including a sustained record of high-quality journal articles and reviews. A record of continued post-tenure teaching excellence will also be expected for candidates seeking promotion to Professor.

**II. Tools used to evaluate scholarship and teaching**

**A. Scholarship**

Evidence of quality scholarship comprises three major components: publication record, external funding, and external reviews. Participation at conferences is recognized as a critical part of professional development, but in itself will not be considered in assessing scholarship quality.

### *1. Publication Record*

Publications should primarily consist of refereed journal articles. These may include manuscripts containing primary data or invited reviews. In this regard, the candidate, especially in pre-tenure service but also in post-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.

A highly regarded book or book chapter may be used as evidence of quality and impact in one's field. In this case, indicators of quality and impact may include the reputation of the publisher, the series, or the contributing authors, or the number of citations the book or book chapter has received.

While high profile op-eds and other public dissemination of one's work via popular media are commendable and, in some cases, can indicate the broad impact of one's work, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, 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.

### *2. External Funding*

For promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, 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 meeting grants in addition to research grants.

### *3. 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 quality of the candidate's journal and other publication venues, productivity, and overall contributions to the field will be given the most weight in judging scholarship. It is expected that external evaluators are themselves internationally recognized as experts in the field and maintain their research programs at institutions that recognize and reward scholarship.

## **B. 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 work in related disciplines. Members of the Biology faculty 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 (SET/ITS scores).
- Engagement with students outside formal classes, such as mentoring students in research projects.
- Supervision of independent study, internships, theses and dissertations
- Scholarly or professional engagement that enhances teaching
- Teaching materials such as course syllabi, assignments, and examinations that serve as evidence of a 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.

SET/ITS scores, although imperfect, are an important indicator of teaching effectiveness. In general, a comparison will be made between the faculty member’s SET/ITS scores and the average scores achieved by Biology faculty and also by faculty from across the College of Arts and Sciences. At a minimum, SET/ITS scores 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.

## **C. 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 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. Other service activities, such as service to professional societies or efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are also encouraged, particularly in the case of candidates seeking promotion to Professor. An outstanding service record will not make up for deficiencies in other areas.

**This is what Biology means by:**

*\*Minimum level of service.* In the first 1-3 years, faculty should participate in one committee and one event per year, and after 3+ years participate in two or more committees and two or more events per year. Service includes departmental, college and university-level committees, and outreach/admissions events both on or off campus.