SEAS Promotion and Tenure Policy for Tenured and Tenured Track Faculty

Recommendations to promote and tenure faculty members are the most important decisions made by SEAS because they determine the quality of the faculty for decades to come. Decisions should be based on the extent and impact of the contributions the candidate has made and potentially will make in teaching, research and service. The School and Departments have the responsibility to create environments in which faculty can flourish in their research, teaching and service. The evaluation of an individual’s contributions necessitates the collection of information and the preparation of documents by which the candidate’s past performance and future potential can be assessed. The evaluation should be based on both quantitative and qualitative information and a fair and transparent process.

I. Criteria for Promotion and Tenure (P&T)

A. Research and Scholarship

Faculty members must demonstrate excellence in research and scholarship. Independent and collaborative research and disciplinary and interdisciplinary research are all valued.

Evidence of excellence in research and scholarship, which varies by field, typically includes:

- Originality and significance of contributions to research areas and/or interdisciplinary areas, including the quality, quantity, focus and scholarly impact of the writings
- Sustained research support and proposal submissions, including awards of competitive fellowships, and the impact of funding results on research communities, engineering disciplines and practice, industry/startups, and society
- Successful advising of Ph.D. students and other trainees
- Awards and honors received for research
- National and international recognition
- Letters of support evaluating research and research impacts

B. Teaching and Educational Activities

The candidate must demonstrate excellence in teaching, advising, and mentoring students. Ideally, the candidate will accumulate teaching experience at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and will have conducted classes of various sizes and types.

Evidence of excellence in teaching and educational activities typically includes:

- Peer reviews of teaching
- Development of new courses
- Letters from current and former students
- Student evaluations
- Continuous improvement and updating material in existing courses
• Introducing innovative instructional practices
• Efforts to improve teaching effectiveness
• Presenting and/or publishing about teaching/education
• Awards and honors for teaching (local, regional, and national)
• Advising and mentoring students – both graduate and undergraduate
• Commitment to diversity, under-represented minorities and women in STEM fields through teaching, research, mentoring, outreach, and program development

C. Service, Leadership and Diversity

Each faculty member is expected to contribute to the functioning of the University, School, and/or Department by serving on/chairing committees, participating in activities, and undertaking a fair share of service assignments. Both quality and quantity are important. Each faculty member is expected to perform and take leadership roles in professional activities, e.g., professional practice, public service, diversity, service in technical and professional societies and associations, and editorial work for professional journals.

II. Reappointments, Promotions and Direct Hiring

Tenure-track assistant professors and, if requested, associate professors hired with term, are typically evaluated in the third year for reappointment and then in the sixth year for promotion/tenure. Using the criteria for tenure and promotion, the third year review should emphasize the potential for tenure and promotion in due course. Promotion to full professor is based on a higher level of sustained achievement in research, teaching, and service/leadership than expected for promotion to associate professor. Expectations include demonstrated achievements and leadership in the candidate’s field/fields with a sustained record of significant scholarship, sustained teaching excellence, and strong internal and external service and leadership. There is no limit on the number of candidates a department can nominate in a year. All direct hires into tenured positions must be evaluated by the Department and SEAS P&T Committees according to the School’s criteria for tenure and promotion. A compressed timeline may be necessary, depending on the situation.

III. Procedures for Promotion and Tenure

A. The Probationary Period of Tenure-Track Faculty

The probationary period for tenure is the cumulative amount of time served as a faculty member in the School in full-time term appointments on the tenure-track. The probationary period shall not be longer than seven years for any full-time faculty member. The probationary period may only be extended if a written request by the faculty member has been approved in writing by the dean and provost. A request shall be made in advance of any leave. Examples of circumstances under which this “clock-stopping” may be approved include but are not limited to: (1) engagement in important public or University service, (2) parenting leave, and (3) serious personal or family illness. An approved extension of the probationary period will not penalize the faculty member during the P&T process.

In exceptional cases, candidates may be considered for early promotion and/or tenure before the probationary period elapses. Probationary-period faculty members who are not reelected or promoted within the seven-year probationary period must be given written notice of termination of contract as specified in the Provost’s P&T document under “probationary period for tenure.”

B. Schedule for P&T Decisions
The normal annual period for the P&T process follows:

**Spring:** The Department P&T Committee starts gathering information about eligible candidates for promotion/tenure to determine which candidates meet the criteria. Names of possible external letter writers are identified (See Appendix B).

**Summer:** External letters are requested. The targeted deadline for receiving the letters should be before the first of August (See Appendix B).

**Middle of September:** The Department P&T Committee meets and reviews all of the material about the candidate, including letters. All faculty members eligible for reappointment and promotion must be notified of the decision of the Department P&T Committee in writing no later than the middle of September to allow for self-nominations. The chair forwards to the dean the names of candidates who received positive decisions to go forward with the promotion/tenure process. The names of candidates in the sixth year of their probationary period who are not nominated by the Department P&T Committee must also be submitted to the dean along with an explanation of the reasons for the decision. Those candidates have the option to self-nominate.

**Early November:** The nominator must submit the dossier to the dean’s office by the deadline for submission (normally around the first of November) for consideration by the SEAS P&T Committee. See Appendix A for information required and format of the dossier.

**February 1:** The dean delivers recommendations on promotion and tenure to the provost. Each candidate is informed about the dean’s recommendation in a timely manner to allow for an appeal.

### C. Promotion and Tenure Committees

A description of the responsibilities and composition of the Department and SEAS P&T Committees is given in the SEAS Promotion and Tenure Committees Policy.

### D. Procedures for Faculty with Secondary Appointments

The P&T procedures for faculty with secondary appointments are the same except that

- one member from each secondary department shall serve on the primary departments P&T Committee, and
- a letter from each secondary department shall be submitted to the primary department’s P&T Committee. The letter should represent the secondary department’s views.
Appendices

Appendix A. The Candidate's Dossier

Note: The dossier’s content and format is applicable for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. For the sake of brevity “promotion” is used as a placeholder in the text for all three actions. It is both the candidate’s and the nominator’s responsibility to accurately present the case, including all pertinent evidence to support the promotion.

The dossier must adhere to the following organization:

1. Nominator’s Letter (no more than 5 pages). The nominator’s letter shall discuss the candidate’s accomplishments in research, teaching, and service/leadership. In addition, the letter shall also include (i) a discussion of the candidate’s annual reviews since the time of the candidate’s reappointment or last promotion, and (ii) the vote and recommendation of the Department P&T Committee.

2. Candidate’s Research Statement (no more than 3 pages). This statement should describe the candidate’s research and should give the reader insight into the candidate’s work and its significance. It should provide context, including the impact of the research within the candidate’s field/fields and beyond.

3. Candidate’s Teaching Statement (no more than 3 pages). This statement should describe the candidate’s teaching philosophy, goals, strategies, successes and innovations. The candidate should give a critical assessment of teaching experience and methods, which should be framed by discussion of successes and failures. The statement should also discuss any actions taken to improve teaching and the results. Any evidence of commitment to diversity, under-represented minorities and women in STEM fields through teaching, research, mentoring, outreach, and program development shall be included. The candidate’s future approach and plans in teaching should also be included.

4. Candidate’s Service, Leadership and Diversity Statement (no more than 2 pages). This statement should describe the candidate’s efforts in service, leadership and diversity and their impacts. This description includes service, leadership and diversity both within and beyond the university.

5. Candidate’s Complete Curriculum Vitae. The CV should include the following items, each organized in a reverse chronological order:
   a. Starting date (including year and month) of UVA professional appointments and previous professional employments.
   b. The date and place of undergraduate and graduate degrees and postdoctoral training.
   c. Honors and awards received.
   d. A list of publications and scholarly work separated into categories: archival peer reviewed journal articles, archival peer reviewed conference proceedings, books, book chapters, and others categories as appropriate:
      - Each publication listing must include the complete list of authors, with student coauthors advised by the candidate underlined and the candidate’s name in bold, title of publication, name of the Journal/Conference, date of publication, page numbers/article number and the impact factor of the journal.
      - For conference papers, the selectivity/impact of each paper should be given, for example, by giving the acceptance rate of the conference.
   e. The candidate’s h-index and citation count, according to Google Scholar, Web of Science or some other citation organizations.
   f. A list of graduate students directed or being directed (separated into Doctoral, Master’s of Science, and Master’s of Engineering), their status, including year of the most recent major
milestones (qualifying exam, proposal, projected defense date), and the placement of the students after graduating.

g. A list of undergraduate student researchers who were involved in a significant manner in the candidate’s research with or without a thesis.

h. A list of visitors and postdoctoral fellows supervised.

i. A list of external research grants and contracts, including proposals currently under review. The listing must include the name of the sponsoring institution, the amount of the award, the duration of the award (including years and months), the candidate’s role (e.g., PI, Co-PI and Senior Personnel), and the amount of total funding and the amount targeted for the candidate.

j. A list of presentations organized by keynote and invited presentations, with the inviting organizations and institution/department and date indicated.

k. A list of issued patents, filed patents and disclosures and formal copyrights awarded or pending.

l. A list of internal service/leadership performed since joining UVA. Service shall be categorized as Department, School, or University.

m. A list of professional services, identifying leadership roles in service assignments such as conference organizer roles and journal editorial board.

5. Lists of and links to three (or five in the case of promotions to full professors) publications that candidates consider their most significant work; the impact of these selected publications should be discussed in the candidate’s letter.

6. A Teaching Portfolio consisting of the following:
   a. A chart or list of every course taught at UVA since coming to UVA or since the last promotion at UVA. The listing for each course shall include the course number and title, the number of students enrolled, and the overall course and instructor ratings and the response rate on the student evaluations.
   b. A complete set of student evaluations of each course taught at UVA.
   c. Additional materials that help to document the candidate’s accomplishments in teaching, advising, and mentoring students.

7. Peer evaluation letters (See Appendix B). At least eight letters of reference from leading external experts competent to assess the standing of the candidate in the candidate’s research fields will be requested, and at least six submitted. For reappointment, letters are not needed.

8. Student letters. Four letters from graduate and undergraduate students shall be included.

9. Annual reviews by the Peer Review Committee, annual chair evaluations and any P&T evaluations/recommendations since hiring at UVA or since the candidate’s last promotion shall be included.

10. Signed waiver form (optional under Federal law; if waiver form is not signed, the letter writers will be so notified).

The dossier must follow the above outline, in the order specified above, and include the subheadings identified above. Instructions for the construction of the electronic dossier are to be provided by the Dean’s Office. The nominator must insure that the candidate’s dossier for promotion is complete and up-to-date when forwarded to the dean.

The SEAS P&T Committee accepts a one-time update to the dossier, if necessary. This update should be delivered no later than the end of the third week of November and shall only contain factual information such as acquisition of new funding, newly accepted publications, and specific examples of professional recognition.
Appendix B. External Letters

No external letters are needed for the third year reappointment. For tenure and promotion, external letters of reference must be solicited from widely recognized external experts competent to assess the standing of the candidate in his/her research field. The candidate shall recommend a list of potential letter writers and the nominator shall select four from the candidate’s list and add an additional four, chosen to obtain a balanced and objective evaluation of the candidate. In the case of self-nomination, the candidate should recommend six potential letter writers and the dean or the dean’s designee shall select four from the list and four additional.

- At least eight will be requested, and at least six will be submitted.
- All requests for letters must be included along with all the responses of the letter writers.
- All of the letters received must be included in the dossier along with brief biographies of the letter writers.
- A letter from the candidate’s Ph.D. advisor shall not be requested.
- “Arm’s length” letters are preferable (i.e., letters from experts who know the candidate from the literature or professional settings only).
- Letter writers who are co-authors and/or co-investigators shall be explicitly identified.
- Candidates may identify individuals from whom they prefer that letters not be solicited, with the final decision on this resting with the nominator.
- For candidates being considered for promotion to full professor, at least one letter should be received from someone outside the U.S. who can speak to the international reputation of the candidate.

Information Provided to the Letter Writers:

At a minimum, a copy of the complete Curriculum Vitae of the candidate, along with the candidate’s research and teaching statements shall be provided to all external letter writers.

Requests for external letters of reference generally involve two-steps. Initially an email inquiry is made to find out if the person is available to serve as a reviewer on the case. Later a formal letter of request is made with full instructions, due date, and materials or information on how to access materials.

1. Template for initial ask

<Date>
To: <email address>
Subject: Request for Evaluation

Dear Professor YYY,

<Professor X> is being considered for <promotion and/or tenure> to <Associate Professor/Professor> in the Department of XXX at the University of Virginia. As you know, promotion and tenure recommendations are among the most important decisions that a department, school, or university makes. An important part of the evaluation is a set of letters from experts in Professor X's field. I am writing to find out if you would be available and willing to review Professor X’s accomplishments. The evaluation letter would be due by xx xx, 20xx.

I hope you are available to write the evaluation, and I would greatly appreciate your letting me know in the next two weeks if you are able to do so. If you are available, I will send further instructions and copies/link of Professor X’s material.
2. Template for formal requested letter:

Dear Professor YYY,

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter evaluating the work of Professor X as <he/she> is being considered for <tenure and/or promotion to Associate/Professor>. You can access the Promotion and Tenure Policy of School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the University of Virginia (UVA) by clicking on the link so that you can review the criteria for tenure in UVA’s School of Engineering and Applied Science.

To assist you in writing this evaluation, I <have enclosed> <provide a link to> the following materials: Professor X’s Curriculum Vitae and research and teaching statements. If you have any questions or would like additional materials, please let me know. I would like to ask that your letter of evaluation include:

- A brief statement describing the context of your knowledge of <Professor X>
- An evaluation of Professor X’s achievements and impact on his/her field,
- An indication whether Professor X should be <tenured and/or promoted> based on the criteria of UVA’s School of Engineering and Applied Science.

Although you may not be familiar with Professor X’s teaching and service, we would be grateful if you would share any comments that you have on these activities.

In order to meet the School and University deadlines, I will need your letter by <Date>.

Please note that, under University of Virginia policy, the identity of authors of letters of evaluation that are included in the personnel review files are to be held in confidence. Professor X has signed the form to waive his/her right to access letters of reference. To the extent permitted by law, we will treat your response as confidential and make it available only to those involved in the review process.

The Department is aware that requests such as this are time-consuming, and I am very grateful to you for taking on this task. If you have any questions, or will have any difficulty responding in time, please call me at 434–xxx-yyyy or send e-mail to <ZZ@virginia.edu>.

Thank you for agreeing to do this. I look forward to hearing from you.

3. Template for requesting letters from students

Dear <student name>,

The Department of XXX is considering the promotion of Professor X from XX Professor to YY Professor. Part of the process requires letters from students whom Professor X has interacted with, including as a teacher, mentor, research adviser, interest group adviser, etc. We are interested in learning about your experience with <him/her> and the impact on your education, professional and personal development, and goals. We are also interested in your experience interacting with Professor X, as a teacher and mentor, such as providing timely feedback, communicating clear expectations, explaining complex concepts, and treating students fairly.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to write a letter for Professor X. I would like to receive the letters no later than <October 1 or DATE>. If you are able write such a letter, please let me know by replying to this email at your earliest convenience.

I realize that requests such as these represent an imposition on your valuable time and will indeed be grateful if you are willing to assist us in this important review process. If you need any other information, please let me know.
Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.