

Procedures and Criteria for Promotion and Tenure

§1. General Guidelines from the Mason Engineering P&T Committee

Criteria for promotion and tenure are based on statements from the George Mason University *Faculty Handbook*, section 2.4, which can be found at

<http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/handbook/>

More specifically, we rely upon the following statements (taken from the version of the *Faculty Handbook* dated July 1, 2017):

Candidates ... will be evaluated in light of the missions of the University which are teaching; research and scholarship, ... and service (as defined in Section 2.4.3). ... Although candidates are not expected to have equal levels of commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these areas, high competence is expected. Genuine excellence must be exhibited in the areas of teaching or research/scholarship. ...

Effective teaching is demonstrated by the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods and presentations, and by successful learning outcomes. Contributions to teaching include the development and implementation of new courses and programs; the development of instructional materials, including applications of new technologies; the training and supervision of teaching assistants; mentoring graduate students; clinical and field supervision of students; and student advising.

Scholarly achievement is demonstrated by original publications and peer reviewed contributions to the advancement of the discipline/field of study or the integration of the discipline with other fields; by original research, artistic work, software and media, exhibitions, and performance; and by the application of discipline- or field-based knowledge to the practice of a profession.

[Comments that are less relevant have been omitted in these quotations.]

The Mason Engineering Promotion and Tenure Committee established the criteria below for measuring teaching, research, and service. A candidate need not meet all the standards for a category. However, the criteria guide our discussions, and point to areas that require careful assessment. For example, if a candidate published few papers, we would try to determine if the length, depth, importance, or impact of the candidate's publications would provide an alternative measure of "high competence" or "genuine excellence."

Our first criterion asks that a candidate "demonstrate research leadership". One (but by no means the only) aspect of leadership is that a candidate demonstrate independence from co-authors and former advisors. We recognize that much research is collaborative. But if a large portion of a candidate's work is joint with one individual or a small unchanging group of colleagues, then that will reflect poorly on the candidate. The candidate's distinct intellectual contribution must be convincingly established.

In evaluating publications and external funding, the committee understands that standards may vary from one discipline to another. For this reason the committee asks each department chair to submit information that gives more detailed guidance for faculty from that department. Here are examples of the types of information that would be appropriate (not all items need be included):

- A short list of preferred journals and/or conferences for each major sub-discipline within a department.
- Identifying preferred journals and/or conferences by minimum impact factors and/or acceptance rates.
- Specifying an expected h-index for candidates for promotion and tenure.
- Expected sources of external funding, i.e., the best regarded agencies and organizations.

In addition, department chairs should provide guidance for evaluating the productivity of candidates for promotion and tenure:

- Expected publication rates in preferred publication venues as measured as a typical number of publications per year; a range should be given for both High Competence and Genuine Excellence, at both the tenure and promotion levels.
- Expected levels of external funding as measured by research expenditures per year, with ranges for both High Competence and Genuine Excellence, at both the tenure and promotion levels.

These documents will be reviewed by the committee to determine if they are consistent with expectations at the School level. Once approved, these documents will be available as supplements to the School's promotion and tenure criteria.

Some promotion and tenure candidates may be difficult to evaluate using the above information. In such cases appropriate evidence should be provided that assesses quality and productivity of publications and funding.

Publications are judged by their intrinsic merit (usually assessed indirectly from the comments in the external letters), as well as the reputation and acceptance rate of the journal or conference proceeding. The acceptance rate is especially important for publications in conference proceedings; an acceptance rate of 25% or less is desirable. If a publication appears in a journal or proceeding that has low standards or a weak reputation, it may do little to enhance the dossier of a candidate.

A candidate should specify whether to be considered for genuine excellence in research or teaching. If a candidate wishes to be considered for genuine excellence in both teaching and research, then publications, grants, and related items should be identified with either teaching or research, but not both. The committee will assess teaching and research separately, and will not include any publication, grant, or related accomplishment as counting toward both categories. If no specification is provided the committee will assume that the candidate is being

considered only for genuine excellence in research, and all publications and grants will be assessed accordingly.

Our criteria make reference to publications, but we are willing to interpret this term more broadly. In some cases, software packages, inventions, or patents might be considered as equivalent to more traditional publications.

The procedures for promotion and tenure are also based on the George Mason University *Faculty Handbook*, section 2.7.3, which can be found at the URL listed above.

Further details (particularly on the preparation of candidate dossiers) can be found later in this document.

§2. *Dossier Guidelines*

The Promotion & Tenure dossier should conform to the requirements stipulated by the Provost:

<https://provost.gmu.edu/faculty-appointments/tenure-track-faculty-appointments/>

and (as of August 2015) should contain the following materials, in the following order. This description has been customized to Mason Engineering. Items in *italics* are emendations by the Mason Engineering Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Casebook

1. Letter of recommendation from Dean or Director [that includes] summaries of prior reports, evaluations of performance in research, teaching, and service and evaluation of probable future trajectory. Letters should clearly indicate candidate's intention to be considered for "Genuine Excellence" in scholarship, teaching, or both.
2. Letters of recommendation from first and second level committees evaluating the case, and from school directors/department chairs (where relevant). Letter should include a roster of committee members at each level. Letters should clearly indicate candidate's intention to be considered for "Genuine Excellence" in scholarship, teaching, or both.
 - a. NOTE: Dean and committee letters should normally NOT quote directly from outside letters or cite referees by name, as opposed to summarizing content. Brief quotes (though not be named) can be included when important for the case.
 - b. *When relevant, the Department Chair should make reference to the candidate's third-year interim review.*
 - c. *In addition to addressing the criteria discussed in this memo, the department memo should (a) mention the h-index for the candidate, as obtained from Google Scholar, (b) assess the quality of the journals and conference proceedings for publications.*
 - d. *Peer review of the candidate's classroom teaching, conducted by one or more Mason Engineering faculty members.*
 - e. *A review by one or more Mason Engineering faculty members of the teaching materials in the Casebook Supplements of the dossier.*
3. Candidate's employment chronology, particularly at GMU to include: date of hire, date when appointed to a tenure track position and tenure and promotion dates, prior to full professorship.
4. Candidate's vita, including clear evidence about research – publications, grant and contract awards, conferences and invited talks, etc. Evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities may also be provided for consideration toward promotion or tenure.
 - a. *See below for specific requirements for the curriculum vitae of candidate. Evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities may also be provided for consideration toward promotion or tenure.*
5. Candidate's statement about teaching and research, including future plans (not to exceed 8 pages).
 - a. *See note on Details on the Dossier for Volgenau School.*
6. Outside letters:

- a. Minimum of 5
 - b. This section should also contain the letter sent to the referees, and evidence of referee credentials.
 - c. Units may allow candidate to suggest up to 40% of the outside referees; they may also allow candidate to name one or two individuals to exclude; candidates in no case will see the final list of referees.
 - d. *No more than 40% of the external reviewers may be chosen by the candidate (candidate may also name 1-2 individuals to exclude, but should not see the final list); see also the discussion of external letters under "Details on the Dossier".*
 - e. *Curricula vitae of outside reviewers (brief versions are acceptable)*
 - f. *The letters should be preceded by a brief statement indicating (a) how many letters were requested, (b) how many were received, (c) of those received, how many were from reviewers recommended by the candidate.*
7. Evidence of teaching quality.
- a. Student course evaluations
 - b. When applicable, theses and dissertations supervised; mentoring and advising activity
 - c. Other evidence of teaching effectiveness such as:
 - i. Class visits by peers
 - ii. Random sample letters
 - iii. Student comments based on the whole population, not selected samples
 - iv. Alumni letters
 - v. Student focus groups.
 - d. *See Details on the Dossier below for further guidance.*
8. Other supporting evaluative materials (testimony about service or outreach, evidence of academic entrepreneurship, etc.); not to exceed 8 pages.
- a. *See Details on the Dossier below for further guidance.*
9. *List of research materials in Casebook Supplements*
10. *List of teaching materials in Casebook Supplements*
11. *List of service materials in Casebook Supplements*
12. *Procedural checklist for Promotion and Tenure Cases (available on the Provost Office website)*

Casebook Supplements

- A. Sample research materials
- B. Reviews and citations of research work [optional]
- C. Sample teaching materials
- D. Sample service materials [optional]
- E. [Any other appendices that the candidate considers appropriate]

The dossier will be provided electronically in a form and location specified by the Senior Associate Dean, based on university requirements.

Details on the Dossier

The dossier includes everything that the candidate wishes to offer for the consideration of the various individuals, groups, and committees involved in the promotion and tenure assessment process.

The dossier should include a Personal Statement from the candidate, summarizing their career, and describing future plans. The Personal Statement should give context for the candidate's c.v., for example by explaining the broad themes that unite a series of publications.

The dossier should also include an expanded curriculum vitae that includes:

- Academic degrees;
 - Academic positions;
 - Industrial, consulting, and summer positions;
 - Professional service, boards, committees, and public service;
 - Honors, awards, and professional recognitions;
 - Publications (include citation counts for each publication):
 - Refereed journal articles (include impact factor for each journal)
 - Refereed chapters in books
 - Books
 - Articles in refereed conference proceedings (include acceptance rate for each conference proceeding);
 - Edited volumes for which the candidate is an editor;
 - Other publications;
 - Grant and contract awards, including the project title (possibly abbreviated); name of the funding agency; total grant funding, indicating the candidate's share if the grant is co-funded; and start and end years of award.;
 - Talks and presentations
 - Summaries of teaching ratings
 - Current proposal activity including agency, amount, status, dates submitted; and
 - Any other relevant information.
 - Within sections, items should be numbered by category, e.g., journal publications 1, 2, 3, ..., then restart number for conference papers 1, 2, 3, ... Research grants and contracts should also be numbered.
 - For research grants and contracts, candidates should provide the total dollar amount of the award, and the percentage of the award and dollar amount for the candidate's responsible share. Candidates should also give totals at the beginning of the research funding sections, e.g., 10 grants and contracts, total value of \$3,000,000, total responsible share is \$2,125,000.
 - Candidates should also list committees, listing internal and external/professional committees as separate lists. Also list professional memberships such as ASEE, IEEE, etc.
- A profile of all journals should be included for the candidate's publications with sufficient information regarding selectivity, impact, and readership to evaluate the importance and visibility of papers placed in those journals. In fields where conference proceedings are considered to be on a level of importance similar to journal papers, the same information should be provided.

Other Suggestions

It is strongly recommended that the candidate give a seminar on his/her research during the Fall semester before the Mason Engineering committee reviews the candidate. The seminar may be comparable to a research seminar at a conference or outside university, and need not be adapted to a broader audience. The Mason Engineering committee should be given generous advance notice of the seminar so that selected committee members can be designated to attend. The seminar should be scheduled in consultation with the Senior Associate Dean's office.

Candidates should consider notifying their department at the beginning of the Spring semester prior to submitting their application for candidacy, so that peer teaching evaluations can be scheduled even if the candidate is considering a faculty study leave.

The department chair (or designate) is expected to be available during the committee's deliberation of a candidate from the department.

§3. Timeline

The promotion and tenure process takes about one year to complete. Below is a recommended timetable, although the deadlines for the later steps of the process are specified annually by the Provost.

March (or earlier)	Candidate tells department chair of desire to seek promotion and/or tenure
Summer	Candidate prepares dossier
	Department identifies possible outside reviewers
Early August	Candidate submits dossier
Mid August	Department sends copies of dossiers to outside reviewers
Late August / early September	Chairs inform Dean's office of candidates for promotion and tenure; candidates work with Senior Associate Dean's office to schedule seminars.
September	Department performs preliminary review of candidate
October	Seminars by candidates for promotion and tenure.
Early November	Department completes review of candidate; department committee submits recommendation letter to chair
Mid November	Department chair reviews case and prepares recommendation letter
Monday before Thanksgiving	Complete dossiers submitted to Senior Associate Dean
Fall exam week	Mason Engineering committee reviews cases
January	Mason Engineering committee submits recommendation letters to Dean
February	Dean submits recommendation letters to Provost
Mid Spring	Provost reviews cases
Late Spring	Board of Visitors reviews cases

§4. External Reviewer Qualifications & Selection Process

Letters of reference will be solicited from outstanding professionals in the candidate's field. The department committee should first select a set of possible reviewers; the candidate may then be asked to provide 2-3 names to the committee. (If there are duplicate names, they will be considered as committee choices, not candidate choices.) It is desirable to have at least 4-6 letters in the dossier from individuals chosen by the committee, with 6-8 letters in total. The candidate may also name a few individuals to exclude, but should not be shown the final list of reviewers.

No one of lower rank than the candidate should be chosen as an outside reviewer. It is preferable to have full professors (or equivalent) as outside reviewers. Dissertation advisors and post-doc supervisors should not be chosen as external reviewers. Co-authors and research collaborators within the past 7 years are likewise discouraged. The candidate's past students – both graduate and undergraduate – may never serve as reviewers.

A majority of the outside reviewers should be faculty members. A biosketch or abbreviated curriculum vitae should be included for each external reviewer with sufficient information to enable the Mason Engineering Promotion & Tenure Committee to assess the research qualifications of the reviewers.

The Dean's office has developed recommended letters for sending to outside reviewers; see below. Reviewers will be asked to identify any potential conflicts of interest. Outside reviewers may be sent a hard copy of the dossier or be given electronic access, at the discretion of the department chairman; they should also be given electronic access to the materials in the Casebook Supplements.

The George Mason University practice is that all internal memos evaluating the candidate's promotion materials are shared with the candidate at the time they are added to the candidate's dossier. Letters from external reviewers, however, are not shared with the candidate. In addition, the internal memos should not include direct quotes from the external letters, nor should they mention the names of the external reviewers.

Below are included two letters that can be adapted to request external reviews. The first asks if the person is willing to be a reviewer. The second officially asks for the review. Please adapt as appropriate.

Dear Dr. <name of potential reviewer>,

I am writing to ask you to be an external reviewer for Dr. <name of candidate>, who is being considered for tenure and promotion to the rank of <Associate Professor or Professor> in the Department of <name of department> at George Mason University.

Because of your accomplishments and reputation in your field of expertise, we would very much appreciate your assistance in evaluating Dr. <name of candidate>'s record, with emphasis on research and professional service. A copy of <his/her> curriculum vitae is attached for your reference.

We recognize that the evaluation we have requested is burdensome, and we would sincerely appreciate your willingness to assist us in this important matter. Please let

me know as soon as possible whether you agree to be an external reviewer for Dr. <name of candidate>. In order to meet our internal deadlines, we would need to receive the reference letter by <date [perhaps in mid-October]>.

If you agree, around <date [perhaps in mid-August]> we will send you a link to <his/her> online tenure dossier which will include a detailed curriculum vitae, a personal statement and other supporting documents. If you would prefer a hard copy of all materials, please let me know along with an appropriate mailing address.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

<name of department chair>

Here is the second letter officially asking for the review.

Dear Dr. <name of reviewer>,

As you know, we are considering the granting of tenure and promotion to Dr. <name of candidate> at the rank of <Associate Professor or Professor> in the Department of <name of department> at George Mason University. To aid us in this evaluation, we utilize the expert judgment of specialists in <his/her> field. Thank you very much for agreeing to assess Dr. <name of candidate>'s professorial record. To assist you in your evaluation, the promotion dossier including a curriculum vita, personal statement, and some selected research publications, is available online at the URL:

<URL, assuming that materials are provided online>

We are especially interested in your judgment of Dr. <name of candidate>'s capacity to select and carry out research on important substantive or methodological questions and <his/her> continuing potential as a first-class researcher. It would be helpful if you could rank Dr. <name of candidate> with the other scholars at a comparable career state. We are also interested in your opinion as to whether Dr. <name of candidate>'s experience in university teaching is appropriate for this promotion decision. Any other information you can provide would be helpful in our deliberations.

In order to meet our internal deadlines, it would be most helpful if you would provide us with your comments no later than <date [perhaps in mid-October]>. We recognize that the evaluation we have requested is burdensome, and we would sincerely appreciate your willingness to assist us in this important matter.

In addition to your review, it would be helpful if you could provide us with a copy of your curriculum vitae (an abbreviated c.v. is satisfactory), and inform us of any conflicts of interest you may have with the candidate.

Your letter would be kept confidential, to be reviewed only by the respective participants (Promotion and Tenure committees, voting faculty, Dean, Provost and selected members of his staff, and the President.) However, in the event of a grievance or legal action, we cannot assure absolute confidentiality, but will disclose only to the extent required by law.

Sincerely,

<name of department chair>

§5. Criteria for Tenure (Assistant & Associate Level)

The italicized items are considered to be the most important, and a successful candidate should satisfy all of these items.

Research		Teaching		Service	
High Competence	Genuine Excellence	High Competence	Genuine Excellence	University	Professional
<i>Demonstrate research leadership</i>	<i>Demonstrate research leadership</i>	<i>Good teaching ratings and reviews</i>	<i>See Appendix A</i>	Attendance at faculty meetings	Refereeing
<i>A significant publication record</i>	<i>An exceptional publication record</i>	Use of new teaching techniques and technologies		Committee membership (department and school level)	organizing sessions at conferences
<i>External research funding</i>	<i>Significant external research funding</i>				
<i>Good external letters</i>	<i>Very good external letters</i>	Course development		Student advising	Professional society committee membership
<i>Emerging national reputation</i>	<i>National reputation</i>	Evidence of student mentoring		Participation in GMU activities (e.g., open houses)	
Ph.D. students in progress	1 Ph.D. student graduated				
Future promise	Future promise				
Independence & creativity	Independence & creativity				

Research leadership may be demonstrated by activities such as initiating a new area of research, acting as lead investigator for a team project, leading a research group, organizing a conference, serving as editor-in-chief of a journal, serving as an officer in a professional society, and similar activities.

§6. *Criteria for Promotion to Professor or Tenure (Professor Level)*

The italicized items are considered to be the most important, and should all be satisfied by a successful candidate. Unlike in tenure decisions, where potential for future achievement is considered, in promotion decisions there must be evidence of accomplishment.

Research		Teaching		Service	
High Competence	Genuine Excellence	High Competence	Genuine Excellence	University	Professional
<i>Demonstrate research leadership</i>	<i>Demonstrate research leadership</i>	<i>Good teaching ratings and reviews</i>	<i>See Appendix A</i>	Attendance at faculty meetings	Refereeing
<i>A significant publication record</i>	<i>An exceptional publication record</i>	Use of new teaching techniques, technologies		Committee membership (department, school, and university level)	Editorships
<i>External research funding</i>	<i>Significant external research funding</i>				
<i>Good external letters</i>	<i>Very good external letters</i>	<i>Course development</i>		Committee chairmanship	Consultancies
<i>National reputation</i>	<i>International reputation</i>	<i>Mentoring of students</i>		Student advising	Conference organization
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Leadership</i>		Participation in GMU activities (e.g., open houses)	Holding office in a professional society
1 Ph.D. student graduated	Several Ph.D. students graduated				
<i>Accomplishment</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>				
Independence & creativity	Independence & creativity				

Research leadership is discussed in §5. Teaching leadership may be demonstrated by activities such as creating a new academic program, acting as director for an academic program, introducing new teaching methodologies to an academic program, leading student recruitment efforts, and similar activities.

Appendix A: Provost's Guidelines for Genuine Excellence in Teaching

The Provost's office has issued its own guidelines for evaluating genuine excellence in teaching. The Mason Engineering Promotion & Tenure committee bases its assessment on the Provost's criteria for genuine excellence in teaching, with an emphasis on the items italicized below.

The Provost's guidelines are given below (dated 3/2/2009). The material below is taken from <http://provost.gmu.edu/recommended-criteria-for-evaluating-genuine-excellence-in-teaching/>.

Recommended Evidentiary Base for Evaluating Genuine Excellence in Teaching

1. *Outstanding classroom teaching and learning outcomes, as evidenced by the usual measures, including but not limited to student evaluations. Other evidence of teaching effectiveness includes peer observations; letters of support from students, alumni, and colleagues (solicited and unsolicited); student comments based on the whole population, not selected samples; and/or student focus groups. Thoughtful reflection on teaching will be sought in the teaching statement.*
2. Effective teaching is demonstrated by the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods and presentations, and by successful learning outcomes. Example syllabi, other course materials created by the candidate, and student work used with permission can be used as sources of evidence.
3. When applicable, evidence of educational work with students outside the classroom. For example, supervising undergraduate research, master's theses, and dissertations; advising and mentoring activities; and/or clinical and field supervision of students.
4. *Faculty leadership in promoting student learning and teaching excellence. For example, developing successful and innovative curricula and programs; developing instructional materials; teaching-related training, supervising, and mentoring of other faculty and graduate students; developing teaching innovations (e.g., the use of technology); leading team-teaching initiatives; and/or building support for educational partnerships within and across institutions.*
5. Teaching excellence across a variety of classes, e.g., large and small, face-to-face and hybrid or online, undergraduate and graduate, while maintaining a consistent and appropriate teaching load.
6. *Maintenance of at least highly competent research, evidenced by the usual measures, including outside letters.*
7. *Evidence of teaching and learning impact beyond the classroom. This involves some combination of conference presentations, workshops, performances, or exhibitions; invitations to other places; texts or teaching materials, including electronic; or articles on teaching and/or learning outcomes (see also #3 above). External funding for curricular development, piloting teaching methods, or advising could serve in this category also.*

Note that building a case for Genuine Excellence in Teaching and steps toward appropriate evidence usually emerges over the career of the professor and is not a last minute event. Outside evaluative letters should be based on a holistic evaluation of all of the above criteria. Very occasionally, exceptions to these criteria can be made, based on truly unusual and evidenced classroom impact and impact on other faculty members on campus.