

Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

APPENDIX 1: Amendments to Department Bylaws Relating to PTR

Passed unanimously, February 6, 2015

Revised: December 7, 2016; November 11, 2020; June 4, 2021

Most policies and procedures relating to promotion, tenure and reappointment (PTR) are set by the Provost, the Dean, UConn's Laws and By-Laws, and the UConn-AAUP contract. The Provost's Office maintains a website that outlines major policies and procedures and provides links to key documents. Found below is guidance on how these policies and procedures are applied in the Department of Geography.

PTR is awarded in recognition of faculty contributions to the mission of the University in the areas of: a) scholarship and research; b) teaching and advising of both undergraduate and graduate students; and c) service to the department, university, and discipline as well as to the many audiences outside of the UConn community. While a successful candidate need not excel in every category, a candidate's application must reflect significant and sustained scholarly productivity, a record of successful teaching, and a pattern of effective service. The University of Connecticut is a leading research university, so a candidate's record of sustained scholarly productivity is the most important factor in earning promotion, tenure, and reappointment.

The Department of Geography expects its faculty to achieve national or international prominence in their chosen field of research. The factors that will be weighed in judging such accomplishments are the same as those detailed in the Department's Merit Review Process and Rating System (Appendices 2 and 3).

However, it is important to distinguish between the merit criteria and the merit pay review process. Merit review is conducted annually to make annual salary decisions. In contrast, PTR recommendations are conducted for the purpose of making promotion and tenure decisions. Hence, a record of consistent merit awards is important in signaling progress toward promotion, but annual salary increases do not alone imply that a candidate has reached the level of "substantial and sustained" work needed to earn promotion or tenure. The PTR committee is charged with evaluating "substantial and sustained" research productivity over several years, not just a single year.

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1. Significant and sustained scholarly productivity

At each level of appointment from assistant, to associate, to full professor, candidates should demonstrate significant and sustained research productivity. This implies that assistant professors develop one or more lines of research that extend beyond their doctoral research and make major, innovative contributions to their research fields as judged by articles published in highly-ranked journals; books published by major publishers; the award of competitive grants, fellowships, and scholarship funding; and awards for their research. Publications based upon the dissertation are encouraged, but our expectation is that candidates will develop new, equally productive projects as they move toward promotion. For associate professors “significant and sustained” means developing or extending one or more lines of research beyond those for which they were awarded promotion and tenure. Faculty at all levels are expected to maintain active programs of research.

The question often arises of how many publications are required to meet these standards. There is not a set number because establishing a reputation in a given field may involve different criteria. In general, it is expected that candidates for promotion to the rank of assistant or full professor will, on average, take a leadership role in more than one high quality publications each year in a major, highly ranked journal in geography or a related field. Overall, in considering the various components of research productivity, the general rule is that more is better than less, but this is not simply a question of quantity because it also involves issues of publication quality, placement, and leadership among other factors. The PTR file many include work done at UConn, in graduate school and at other institutions which together indicate substantial and sustained work for promotion to associate or full professor.

2. Schedule for preparing PTR files

Candidates for promotion and or tenure will prepare PTR dossiers as described by the Office of the Provost. PTR dossiers are generally prepared during the summer and are submitted to the Head and Chair of the PTR committee in August before the start of the start of the fall semester. The Head and Chair check the file for completeness before it is forwarded to the PTR Committee for review at the start of the fall semester.

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3. Issues relating to external referees for tenure and promotion

Candidates preparing for promotion and/or tenure review will also need to prepare additional materials in the spring or early summer before they submit their PTR dossier to the Department. This is because external reviewers are typically invited in late spring so that they can supply their letters in August.

To guide in the selection of external referees, candidates are asked to suggest the names of five or more potential reviewers. Candidates also have the option of listing people they would exclude as reviewers.

Candidates should also be invited to prepare statements for the external reviewers detailing their research, teaching and service accomplishments. This statement may be very similar to the responses included in the PTR form, but the PTR form is an internal UConn document and is not sent to external reviewers. The purpose of the statement is to place the candidate's accomplishments in the context of their overall record of research, teaching and service and to situate their work within broader disciplinary trends.

Candidates should select 3-5 of their best or most representative publications to be sent to external reviewers in their dossiers.

The dossiers sent to external reviewers should include the candidate's:
1) CV; 2) statements on research, teaching and service accomplishments;
and 3) sample publications.

4. The PTR committee and voting procedures

As noted above under item II.C.6, The Promotion, Tenure and Reappointment (PTR) Committee varies in size. It includes all members of the faculty who have achieved the rank or tenure status (or higher) for which a candidate is being considered. In voting, tenure-track faculty can vote on PTR decisions to their rank or below for both tenure-track and CIRE faculty. In voting, CIRE faculty can vote on reappointment and promotion to their rank and below, but only for CIRE faculty, not tenure-track faculty. The PTR Committee's chair is appointed by the Head.

The charge to the committee is to evaluate each PTR dossier and advise the Head as to the candidate's qualifications for promotion and/or tenure. The committee invites all voting members of the faculty (except the candidate) to sit in during any committee deliberation. As noted in Section 9 of this

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Appendix, the candidate can also ask to address the committee. The final vote of the committee is by secret ballot, with the vote count recorded in the committee's report to the Head. A single final report is then prepared by the committee. The Chair of the PTR Committee will write the majority opinion in the final report of the committee; if there is a minority opinion, the members of the minority will add their statement to the final report. If the Chair is of the minority opinion, then another member of the committee will be appointed to write the majority opinion, and the Chair will write the minority opinion. The final PTR committee report will be shared with the candidate by the Chair of the committee.

5. Feedback to associate professors moving toward promotion to full professor.

Associate professors may meet with the head or the department's PTR Committee at any time to discuss progress toward promotion. However, it is recommended that associate professors meet with the head and the PTR Committee at least every third year beyond promotion to associate rank to discuss plans for further advancement. The suggested time for these meetings is in the late spring at the close of the merit review process.

6. Faculty in joint appointments.

If a faculty member has a joint appointment with another campus unit, the director or head of that unit shall also serve as a non-voting member of the geography PTR committee and will be: 1) invited to all committee meetings in which the candidate's dossier is discussed; and 2) asked to supply a letter for the PTR dossier detailing the candidate's contributions to the joint program. If the director or head is unable to serve, that person shall nominate a colleague to serve on the geography PTR committee, to be approved by the PTR committee. That person shall also provide guidance to the PTR committee with respect to specialized journals in the joint field of study. The terms of memos of understanding (MOUs) and any amendments are considered by the PTR committee.

7. Conflicts of interest for PTR committee members.

The PTR report should state whether members of the committee have possible conflicts of interest with the candidates being considered. Members of the PTR committee with a clear conflict of interest in a given case (according to relevant State of Connecticut or University of Connecticut rules) must recuse themselves from all discussion and voting on that candidate. If the Department Head has a conflict of interest with the

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candidate, a senior member of the faculty will be appointed by the Dean's Office to assume the Head's duties.

8. Use of impact factors, the immediacy index, H-scores, and other quantitative measures designed to assess scientific and scholarly productivity and impact.

Candidates can refer to these scores and measures in the documents they submit to the PTR committee. The PTR committee, on their own, can also use these measures in their evaluation of a candidate's scholarly achievement. The committee is also free, as always, to consider the related issues of who cites a candidate's work and how often it is cited; and the annual ratings of journals where candidates publish their work.

If quantitative scores or measures are used, the committee should make every effort to set them in the context of patterns of the discipline and of the subfield. Such scores, as well as patterns of citation vary across the subfields of geography and differ from those of other disciplines. Such scores need to be contextualized to be meaningful.

9. Addressing substantive negative findings

Substantive negative findings are issues that would prevent one or more PTR Committee members from voting for a candidate's promotion.

Candidates may appear before the committee or submit written statements in response to these negative findings. The candidate should be given the opportunity to respond to such negative findings before the committee votes. Committee members may still oppose promotion but, if so, must record their dissenting votes in the Committee's letter to the Department Head with a statement or data supporting their vote.

If the Head of the Department is unable to support a candidate's promotion, this also qualifies as substantial negative findings. The reasons for the findings must be provided to candidate before the Head's report is written. The candidate may respond in person or in writing to these findings before the Head completes the PTR evaluation.

10. SET+ and the use of multiple measures and evidence of teaching effectiveness.

It is important to consider multiple measures and evidence of teaching effectiveness, for two reasons. First, colleagues deserve to be recognized for

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the effort they invest in their teaching. Second, feedback can help all faculty improve their approaches to teaching and mentoring students. It is also the case that useful evaluations of teaching and improvement must, almost of necessity, extend beyond a single course or a single semester's teaching. A more comprehensive evaluation of teaching attempts to sample and analyze a variety of evidence concerning teaching activities. These may include:

- i. **Peer Evaluation of Classroom Instruction.** This is a common and useful form of assessment. Peer evaluation usually involves colleagues attending one or more lectures, and writing a review of lecture skills, use of visual aids or technology, and any other pertinent aspects of the instructional activity. Peer evaluations are most effective when they involve multiple courses and multiple evaluators so that trends can be identified.
- ii. **Trends and Patterns in SET scores.** It is important to look at trends in SET scores through time—particularly in courses offered repeatedly by candidates. The focus here should be on whether the candidate is making improvements through time and is responding to feedback offered by students and faculty.
- iii. **Assessment of Non-classroom Teaching.** An important aspect of teaching in our department is graduate mentoring and individualized student instruction. This type of instruction is rarely represented in SET surveys. Do not overlook evaluation of this aspect of a faculty member's teaching obligation.
- iv. **Classroom Interviews.** This method is gaining in popularity because it provides a good synthesis of faculty perspective and student opinion, it filters out vindictive or irresponsible responses sometimes seen in anonymous SET results, yet it protects the confidentiality of students. A model of a class interview might be as follows:
 - a. A faculty interviewer (or team of interviewers) arranges to use the last 15-20 min. of a candidate's class period for purposes of an evaluation. At the appointed time, the interviewer arrives and the faculty member under review is excused.
 - b. The interviewer explains the purpose of his/her visit. Depending upon the size of the class, the interviewer divides

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the class into several groups of 5 or more students. Groups of less than four may be problematic.

- c. Each group is asked to discuss and reach consensus on two or three questions: These questions might include:
 - i. “What is the most effective aspect of Professor X’s teaching?”
 - ii. “How can Professor X most improve his/her teaching?”
 - iii. “How would you rate Professor X’s interest in helping students to learn?”
- d. After several minutes of free discussion within each group, groups are asked to report their answer to each question. Only answers supported by the entire group can be reported out of the group. These responses are placed upon an overhead or board so that all members of the class can see all answers.
- e. If time allows, the interviewer may elect to lead a discussion or ask for clarification regarding group answers.
- f. The interview is concluded by asking all members of the class to vote on their favorite answer (of those listed on the board or overhead) to each question asked. Votes are recorded.
- g. The interviewer then submits a written report based upon the interview in which the questions asked, the group answers, and the rank order or vote on each answer is reported.
- v. **Student Interviews.** A variation of the classroom interview method described above can be used to interview groups of graduate students or undergraduate students. This method similarly protects the confidentiality of students. Student interviews should probably be conducted in the presence of more than one interviewer so as to protect the interviewer from accusations of putting any particular “spin” on the discussion.
- vi. **Committee Assessment of a Teaching Portfolio.** The colleague under review may submit a portfolio of their teaching activities for review by the committee, or by a separate committee, who in turn

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writes an evaluative report to the dossier. The teaching portfolio can include any items felt to be relevant by the candidate or the evaluation committee. Common materials are sample syllabi, sample exams or quizzes, sample graded essays or term papers, student projects, Web-based or other materials developed for courses, textbooks written, abstracts of student theses, dissertations, or honors projects, or summaries of individualized instruction of students.

- vii. **Direct Submission of a Portfolio to the Dossier.** A faculty member under review may also choose to submit a portfolio of teaching activities in the dossier as an appendix. Candidates are strongly encouraged to be highly selective and concise in what is included in such a dossier. Only the most representative examples should be included. Candidates who overwhelm the dossier with portfolio material have the same effect on review committees that students who submit 40 page term papers have on instructors who made 15 page assignments. Candidates whose portfolios are large and not subject to abbreviation should utilize option 7 above, instead.
- viii. **Student Comments on the SET Forms.** The student comments made in the SET forms is generally considered a confidential communiqué between the student and the faculty member. Occasionally a faculty member may wish to include these comments in the PTR dossier. He or she may do so, of course, but all the comments for a particular course should be included for this strategy to have credibility. This way the PTR committee can consider all SET comments from a particular course or courses and provide a summary and interpretation.

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- ix. **Evidence of Internal or External Grants Received for Improving Teaching.** Demonstrating a willingness and success to acquire funds to improve or develop classes can provide very good evidence of teaching quality and ability.
- x. **Awards Received for Teaching.** Document awards received for teaching and the nature of the selection criteria.
- xi. **Publishing Research on Teaching and Learning Issues.** Some colleagues research their own teaching and pedagogical approaches for publication in major journals both inside and outside geography. Although these projects will be noted in PTR dossier under research and publications, their link in teaching should also be noted.
- xii. **Unsolicited Student Letters.** Faculty under review can contribute letters and email to their dossiers that they have received from students. These letters should be identified as contributed by the colleague under review. The value of such letters is difficult to judge but, in some cases, help to document the impact of teaching in unusual ways.
- xiii. **Other Evidence.** The list above is not exhaustive. Other evidence of teaching accomplishment can be submitted as part of the PTR file.

It is unnecessary for PTR candidates to collect material in all of these categories. This list is offered to highlight the range of materials that can be considered in PTR decisions rather than as a checklist of requirements for promotion.

At the same time, it is important for candidates consider these options so that they collect some type of evidence of teaching performance and effectiveness every semester. By collecting information every semester, candidates will have ample documentation of their teaching annually as well as for their mid-term and tenure reviews.

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11. Evidence of Service

All faculty members are expected to perform service activities within the department, college, university and discipline although these can vary substantially by rank and subfield. The minimum expectation is active contribution in one substantial departmental, college or university committee each year as well as continuing active participation in at least one national or international professional society or association. Candidates seeking promotion to full professorship should take on additional service responsibilities such as being Chair of a major departmental committee (PTR, Undergraduate Coordinator, Merit, Search, etc.), being an active member of major college or university committee (Senate, C&C, College PTR, etc.), and/or having a leadership role in professional organizations.

UConn also values public engagement and community outreach by its faculty in which faculty expertise is used to inform and enrich awareness of issues in the larger community. Efforts made in this direction should be documented in the PTR file. Such service may include public outreach through presentations and testimony and/or work or research that result in presentations, reports, exhibitions, and other products that inform the general public.