

*This does not constitute an employment contract.*

**American University  
Department of Biology  
Promotion & Tenure Guidelines for Tenure-Line Faculty**

**Effective June 2023**

The purpose of this document is to outline criteria for earning tenure, promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, and for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, in the Department of Biology. Although tenure and promotion are often awarded at the same time, they do not have to occur simultaneously. 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 though the scholar's aggregate record will also be consulted.

**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 a faculty member with increasing responsibilities over time. Tenure, promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, and promotion from Associate Professor 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.

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.

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. Similarly, several years of service, including at the university level, and reflecting leadership are also required. Because promotion to Professor requires national and international recognition, faculty customarily begin thinking about preparing their promotion files at a minimum of four years after being promoted to Associate Professor, although in some exceptional cases files for promotion may be submitted earlier after consultations with the Dean's office. To accurately evaluate a sustained level of high-quality scholarship, emphasis will be placed on accomplishments obtained since promotion to Associate Professor, though the aggregate achievements of the faculty member during their entire time at AU will also be considered.

## **II. Tools we use to evaluate scholarship, teaching, and service**

### **A. Scholarship**

Evidence for quality scholarship will comprise three major components: publication record, external funding, and external reviews. Ancillary to these three major components, faculty will receive recognition for scholarship activities that promote values of diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence. Examples include (but are not limited to) working in cross-disciplinary and demographically diverse research teams, making research data and materials openly available, and serving as a reviewer/editor for open-access publishing outlets.

#### *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. Pre-tenure faculty should have publications that reflect their development as an independent scientist (including papers as corresponding author, papers without postdoctoral or predoctoral advisors as authors, etc.). To increase accessibility of published works, faculty should consider publishing their peer-reviewed articles in open access journals, which enhance accessibility to people outside the discipline. However, a faculty member will not be penalized if his/her scholarship is published in more traditional subscription-based/print only journals. 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. Journal quality is assessed by impact factor, the ranking of the journal within its discipline, or other similar journal ranking metrics. Publication citation numbers/indices are also important indicators of the significance and recognition of the candidate's work within their field and may be included to assess quality of a faculty member's scholarship.

Although not as significant as peer-reviewed journal articles, 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 received.

Peer-reviewed conference proceedings/abstracts, non-reviewed publications in dictionaries and the popular press, reviews of textbooks, and trade magazine articles and other non-traditional forms of publication reflect a faculty member's expertise in the field and ability to communicate with non-science audiences. However, these types of publications will not replace the requirement of peer reviewed journal articles.

Participation at conferences is recognized as a critical part of professional development, but in itself will be given less weight when assessing scholarship quality and cannot replace the requirement of peer-reviewed publications.

#### *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 as PI or co-PI. 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 grant from a nationally recognized and competitive source (as PI or co-PI) since becoming an Associate Professor, and are encouraged to compete for training, equipment, 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 candidate's publication venues (journal quality), 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 award scholarship.

## **B. Teaching**

All faculty files for action involving tenure or promotion must include a teaching portfolio containing all five categories of items specified in the Faculty Senate's "Beyond SETs" model (<https://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/upload/beyond-sets-visual-final.pdf>). Members of the biology faculty are expected to challenge students both inside and outside the classroom, engage them in critical analysis and provide timely, fair and objective assessment of their performance. Importantly, all faculty are expected, through their actions and management of classroom activities, to ensure that the classroom is a safe place for all students. The faculty's Teaching Statement may address how they incorporate different learning styles, content materials from diverse perspectives, or provide different modes of access. Excellence in teaching is evidenced by faculty who actively engage their students, help their students develop competencies in their core discipline, and acquire critical faculties for understanding advances in their own field and related disciplines. This "excellence" is not easily captured by any one measure; evidence will be sought in a variety of ways including (not in rank order):

- Classroom visits and peer evaluations from colleagues/CTRL. Ideally, the visit/evaluation should take place at least once in the 3 semesters prior to submitting your file.
- Feedback from student focus groups.
- Mentoring student research projects.
- Engagement with students outside formal classes, such as field-based activities, community-based learning, training graduate teaching assistants, etc.
- Student evaluation of teaching (SET/ITS scores) - with particular focus on improvement in scores and/or maintaining scores consistent with departmental, college, and university values
- Review of teaching materials such as course syllabi, assignments, and examinations that serve as evidence of a well-organized, rigorous, inclusive, and professional approach to teaching.
- Publications related to teaching pedagogy/science education can also be used to show excellence in teaching.

SET/ITS scores, although imperfect, are an important indicator of teaching effectiveness, if at least 45% of students in the class (or the minimum number set by AU) have participated. 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. 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 their overall development as a teacher.

### **C. Service**

Service is an important aspect of professional development and critical for ensuring a strong and effective departmental environment. A strong record of service will be required for a positive outcome in promotion and tenure decisions. However, we also recognize that service obligations would be less 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. Increasing participation in leadership is also expected over time. Other service activities, such as service to professional societies, efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, and discipline-related community-based faculty activities (such as judging in a science fair) in service 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.