



Promotion to Full Professor Guidelines for Associate Professors

Principles

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is committed to serving society through the excellence of its faculty, students, and staff. UTRGV is one of the largest and historically significant Hispanic Serving Institutions in the United States, which makes the work of UTRGV faculty a public good that is especially important to the Rio Grande Valley in addition to the state, nation, and each faculty member's respective discipline. To meet UTRGV's commitment to improving the quality of life of the Rio Grande Valley and beyond, faculty members are expected to perform at the highest levels in their respective disciplines and fields, continuously striving for distinction.

Every UTRGV faculty member should present a distinguished record as a scholar, educator, and colleague. UTRGV faculty must attain a successful and high-quality record of research, scholarship, and/or creative work that projects a clear, coherent, and independent identity as a scholar. As educators, UTRGV faculty must establish a teaching profile that demonstrates growth, impact, and student success. With the awarding of promotion to the next rank, UTRGV expects that faculty members will continue providing intellectual leadership in their research and teaching, and model professionalism in all their work, including service and shared governance activities. The following guidelines and expectations are meant to cultivate full professors at UTRGV who achieve these principles.

Expectations for Promotion to Full Professor

To be promoted to the rank of Professor, faculty are expected to perform with excellence and leadership in all areas of responsibility.¹ The dossiers of faculty must provide clear documentation of their effort and success in the categories of teaching, research, and service. UTRGV's Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP), HOP ADM 06-504, articulates the principles and standards for earning promotion that a series of discrete annual reviews cannot fully define or evaluate. The type of review and decision-making required for promotion necessitates a qualitative analysis that goes beyond the reliance on numerical thresholds commonly associated with annual review.

Regarding the principles and standards for promotion, HOP ADM 06-504 makes repeated reference to achieving high standards of excellence with quality, significant, and impactful work that faculty sustained after earning tenure. For example:

- "Promotion to the rank of professor is a recognition of and reward to faculty who have sustained meritorious records of professional accomplishment that contribute to the university mission" (HOP ADM 06-504, C.2).
- "The purpose of promotion" is "to recognize and reward faculty with records of sustained meritorious professional accomplishments and who also demonstrate potential for continued contributions to UTRGV's mission and vision," with faculty needing to demonstrate "high potential for continued excellence and effectiveness (HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix A, Section 2.a.v and 2.a.v.1).
- "The faculty member must have demonstrated effective teaching if teaching is an assigned duty" (HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix A, Section 2.a.v.3).
- In research, scholarship, and/or creative works, the "quality, significance, impact, and quantity of publications or creative works" are factors in determining promotion (HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix B, Section 2.b).
- In service, the "quality, significance, and impact of the contributions to students, colleagues, the department, college, UTRGV, the community, and the profession," are factors in determining promotion (HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix B, Section 3.b).
- "All those involved in the review process are responsible for reading all materials, reviewing and evaluating the faculty member's performance on each of the performance criteria, and participating in committee discussions and formulating of committee recommendations" (HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix E, Section 2.c). The instruction to read all materials in the process of evaluating the

merits of recommending promotion means that an evaluation of faculty must include a qualitative assessment of the quality, significance, and impact of their work.

Faculty must provide the necessary information in their promotion dossiers to help ensure that reviewers can perform the type of analysis HOP requires. HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix D, outlines the structure of faculty dossiers and states that faculty must provide “summaries of professional accomplishments” for all areas of review (teaching, research and scholarship, service, university-related patient care) (Section 2.a.ii). In what follows, this document outlines how faculty should organize their summaries/narratives of professional accomplishments in each area of review and identifies the information necessary to explain how they are achieving the principles and standards identified in HOP ADM 06-504.

Expectations for Teaching

As educators, UTRGV faculty must establish a teaching profile that demonstrates growth, impact, and student success.² To document growth, impact, and student success, a successful teaching profile will include evidence of ongoing development and improvement in teaching quality, which should result in both student success and a positive and professional reputation as an educator. UTRGV values and holds high expectations for the quality and impact of faculty members’ teaching on student success. These values and expectations are reflected in the categories below. The following categories and expectations are intended to help tenured faculty demonstrate progress towards promotion to full. Department/School minimum criteria are guided by the following expectations:

Pedagogy Statement: Faculty should be able to articulate a philosophy of teaching that communicates their approach to teaching and describes their primary goals as a teacher, advisor and mentor. The body of evidence of teaching practices provided by the faculty member should align with this philosophy.

Continued Development of Teaching Skills: Faculty are expected to stay current with and utilize best practices in teaching and student engagement. Faculty are encouraged to contribute to the advancement of pedagogy within their respective fields. Efforts to develop teaching skills and to keep current on content in the field demonstrate dedication to high-quality teaching. Such efforts might include attending professional development sessions on best practices in teaching, utilizing resources to gather student feedback on teaching, and attending seminars that provide updates to current knowledge and trends in their respective disciplines. Faculty may create teaching and learning scholarship, develop peer-reviewed teaching resources, design and deliver professional development trainings on teaching, and/or create other materials that contribute to advancing pedagogy in higher education.

Use of Peer Feedback on Teaching: In accordance with UTRGV’s [Guidelines for Faculty Peer Observations of Teaching](#), Faculty must obtain at least one peer observation every three years. Peer observations of teaching should provide constructive feedback oriented to supporting faculty members’ continuous growth in teaching. Faculty must reflect on what they learned in this process and how they used their peers’ feedback to improve their pedagogical practices.

Alignment of Curricular Practices to Student Needs: Faculty should analyze and reflect on student outcomes regularly. This analysis and reflection should involve exploring student evaluations and feedback for patterns and using those patterns to make changes to course design, pedagogical strategy, assessment mechanisms, and other aspects of the course that best meets the learning needs of students.³

Engagement with Student Learning Outside the Classroom: This engagement may take many different forms and includes but is not limited to involving students in research and creative activities, supporting students’ participation in service learning and/or community engagement activities, supervising clinical or field experiences, and/or mentoring students in career exploration and development.

Participation in Development of Curricula: While these activities might not occur every year, faculty are expected to participate in course and program development and/or redesign to ensure curricula are reflective of current knowledge in the discipline, aligned with relevant program learning outcomes, and best meet the needs of students. Faculty must provide syllabi and their reflection on how their course aligns with the values and expectations established here.

Expectations for Research, Scholarship, and/or Creative Works

Upon earning tenure, UTRGV faculty must sustain a successful and high-quality record of research, scholarship, and/or creative work that projects a clear, coherent, and independent identity as a scholar.

The work of faculty in this area should lead to the advancement of knowledge.⁴ By achieving these expectations the faculty member will have demonstrated intellectual leadership, but documenting this achievement requires more than enumerating a list of scholarly products. Faculty must demonstrate their achievement in ways that allow for rigorous evaluation of the quality and impact of their work by professional peers both internal and external to the university. The following categories and expectations are intended to help tenured faculty demonstrate progress towards promotion to full. Department/School minimum criteria are guided by the following expectations:

Significance and National Reputation: Faculty should demonstrate achievement in research, scholarship, and/or creative work that establishes themselves as significant and distinguished contributors to the field or profession. Faculty should explain their reasons for choosing the venues where they publish, perform, and/or display their work and should demonstrate how the significance of their work yielded a nationally recognized research program with a coherent and focused theme. Faculty should articulate this theme and peers should be able to recognize the importance of the faculty member's role in developing knowledge in this area.

Consistent Record of Accomplishment with Increasing Significance and Impact: Upon earning tenure and maintaining a research-intensive workload, faculty should continue with the scholarly productivity that earned them tenure, but with increased significance and impact. Scholarly productivity refers to writing peer-reviewed research materials (including but not limited to books, chapters, and journal articles), participating in supplementary scholarly activities (including but not limited to participation in community-engaged scholarship, conferences, edited volumes, substantial book reviews reaching a broad audience, encyclopedia entries, blogs, and public publications, etc.), creating intellectual contributions (including but not limited to patents, inventions, and other intellectual property), displaying and/or performing of creative work, and obtaining external grant funding. Faculty must explain gaps in productivity when those gaps exist.

Sustainability of Agenda and Trajectory: Faculty must demonstrate that their research, scholarship, and/or creative work productivity continues to be sustainable by documenting their ability to secure external grant funding for their research/creative-work trajectory and/or by showing the systematic accumulation of a body of work that builds from their earlier research.

Scholarly Independence: Upon earning tenure, faculty must continue to be independent as a scholar. This independence should be documented by a publication and authorship record that is separate from earlier mentors (such as dissertation committee members), by the author ordering conventions in their respective disciplines, and by thorough explanations of their contributions to co-authored publications, or other collaborative endeavors such as external grant activity. Research, scholarship, and/or creative works conducted as teams are valuable and do not undermine scholarly independence, but faculty must demonstrate their contribution to that work and how that work has greater impact than if it was completed individually.

Quality and Impact: Faculty must explain the quality and impact of their research, scholarship, and/or creative works to both experts and non-experts alike who will evaluate their achievements relative to expectations. Peer review is a crucial indicator of quality work. Beyond peer review, many proxies (or metrics) exist that faculty may use as an indication of quality and impact. These proxies include but are not limited to journal impact factors, journal indices, journal acceptance rates, author citation indices (e.g., h-index), downloads/views, location or venue of the display or performance of creative work, and source of grant funding.⁵ UTRGV supports the responsible use of these proxies, which means that assessment of quality and impact shall not rely on any one proxy and that proxies shall not be used in place of qualitative, expert judgment.⁶ To help ensure responsible use, faculty must not rely on these proxies as being substitutes for detailed explanations of the steps they took to produce high-quality work. Faculty must document and explain how the significance of their work leads to disciplinary and societal impact. The documentation of impact can include but is not limited to the application of knowledge in the community and/or the use of the work in decision-making, citations, awards, and/or the use of products by others in the community, academic or otherwise (e.g., datasets, products, inventions).⁷ Faculty must demonstrate that the impact of their research agenda is greater than it was before earning tenure.

Selection of External Reviewers for Research, Scholarship, and/or Creative Works: External review of faculty in research, scholarship, and/or creative work is extremely important because these external reviewers provide input into the significance, reputation, trajectory, quality, and impact of this work.

Guidelines and selection procedures can be found in the [UTRGV Guidelines for the Selection of External Reviewers for Faculty Promotion and Tenure](#).

Expectations for Service and Shared Governance

UTRGV expects faculty members to model professionalism in all their work, including service and shared governance activities. These activities are essential to the life of the university and an important component of faculty profiles.⁸ Faculty should conceive of their service and shared governance activities as occurring in three areas: the university and its students, university operations and shared governance, and the profession and community. Upon earning tenure, faculty must assume leadership roles in service toward university operations and shared governance and assume leadership roles in their respective disciplinary organizations. Documented and sustained leadership and impact in service and shared governance is an essential component to promotion to the rank of Professor. When participating and leading in shared governance, faculty must document their role in the development of policies and decision-making that affect UTRGV. The following categories and expectations are intended to help tenured faculty demonstrate progress towards promotion to full. Department/School minimum criteria are guided by the following expectations:

Service and Student Success: Faculty should contribute as members, advisors, or leaders in student organizations, international experiences, and recruitment events for the university, college and/or department.

Service to University Operations and Shared Governance: Faculty must contribute to and lead in the life of their university, college, and department by serving on committees and taskforces in a membership and leadership role, which may include curriculum, assessment, awards, hiring, Faculty Senate, and many other areas of university, college, and department operations.

Service to the Profession and the Community: Faculty must contribute to their profession and community. They may contribute in a variety of ways, including but not limited to reviewing manuscripts and/or grant proposals, writing book reviews, or serving/leading in the following: professional organizations (for example, committee work and/or conference planning), agencies, non-profit community organizations, and/or advisory boards that reflect their professional expertise.

Minimum Criteria for Promotion

Upon earning tenure, faculty must evaluate and assess their progress toward achieving the principles and standards of promotion outlined in HOP ADM 06-504, which are specified more clearly in this document.⁹ This document instructs faculty to structure their work and career to meet these high standards and structure their dossiers to allow for rigorous qualitative reviews. Conducting these reviews helps ensure that UTRGV makes promotion recommendations with more substantial analysis than using quantitative minimum criteria as mere thresholds for guaranteeing promotion. The minimum criteria only offer guidance to faculty and does so without setting a threshold for achievement that guarantees promotion.

All evaluation categories can be found in HOP ADM 06-504 [Appendix B Evaluation Categories and Standards](#) and dossier requirements can be found in [Appendix D Dossier Requirements](#). All processes regarding the review, including committee composition and the protocols therein can be found in [Appendix E Review Committee Composition and Requirements Regarding the Review](#).

Any criteria referenced by HOP ADM 06-504 or the appendices, the UTRGV [External Reviewer Guidelines](#), or the [Peer Observation of Teaching Guidelines](#) should not be included in the Department/School/College guidelines as they are applicable as institutional requirements. The following minimum criteria are discipline-specific and uphold the institutional standard of quality, significance, impact, and productivity. Faculty and all other reviewers should use the following minimum criteria as a guide without setting a specific (enumerated) threshold or checklist for achievement.

End Note

¹ These guidelines and expectations have been drafted to establish clarity and consistency in the qualitative judgments that are required in tenure decision-making. On this point, please see...

² Appendix B, section 1, of HOP ADM 06-504 lists the teaching activities expected of faculty.

³ Research on student evaluations of teaching is extensive and tends to confirm the bias and limited usefulness of student evaluations. For example, please see Troy Heffernan, "Sexism, Racism, Prejudice, and Bias: A Literature Review and Synthesis of Research Surrounding Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 47, no. 1 (2022), 144-154; and, Kerry Chávez and Kristina M.W. Mitchell, "Exploring Bias in Student Evaluations: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 53, no. 2 (2020), 270-274

⁴ Appendix B, section 2, of HOP ADM 06-504 lists the research, scholarship, and creative work activities expected of faculty.

⁵ Research documenting the limitations of using any one of these proxies/metrics is extensive. Some proxies are not amendable to all disciplines, research, and/or publication types (e.g., journal articles versus books), and some proxies are subject to manipulation and inflation (as found with journal impact factors). For example, please see Kyle Siler and Vincent Larivière, "Who Games Metrics and Rankings? Institutional Niches and Journal Impact Factor Inflation," *Research Policy* 51 (2022), 104608; Peter Andras, "Research: Metrics, Quality, and Management Implications," *Research Evaluation* 20, no. 2 (2011), 90-106; Björn Hammarfelt and Alexander D. Rushforth, "Indicators as Judgment Devices: An Empirical Study of Citizen Bibliometrics in Research Evaluation," *Research Evaluation* 26, no. 3 (2017), 169-180. Using proxies as the dominant method for evaluation may lead to perverse incentives that undermine the goals that promotion guidelines seek to achieve, such as creativity, intellectual breakthroughs, and excellence. For example, please see Usha C.V. Haley, "Triviality and the Search for Scholarly Impact," *Organizational Studies* 44, no. 9 (2023), 1547-1550; Kevin Ryan, "Academic Freedom and the Eye of Power: The Politics and Poetics of Open Enclosures," *Journal of Political Power* 9, no. 2 (2016), 249-268.

⁶ For documentation of how proxies have been inappropriately substituted for expert decision-making and the slow adoption of responsible use in the United States, please see Alexander Rushforth and Sarah De Rijcke, "Practicing Responsible Research Assessment: Qualitative Study of Faculty Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure Assessments in the United States," *Research Evaluation* 00, preprint (2024), 1-11.

⁷ Documentation of impact, whether artistic, scientific, social, or political is not uniform across disciplines and takes careful consideration. Faculty should consider how impact is conceived in their field. For an overview of these issues, please see Emanuela Reale, et al., "A Review of Literature on Evaluating the Scientific, Social and Political Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities Research," *Research Evaluation* 27, no. 4 (2018), 298-308; Ziyad Marar, "On Measuring Social Science Impact," *Organizational Studies* 43, no. 5 (2022), 821-824; Teresa Penfield, et al., "Assessment, Evaluations, and Definitions of Research Impact: A Review," *Research Evaluation* 23 (2014), 21-32. The diversity of proxies/metrics supported here, and the demand for qualitative explanations of how faculty achieve quality and impact is in-line with the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which calls for the expansion of research quality assessment beyond "journal-based metrics" like Journal Impact Factor. For a brief review of DORA and DORA-approved assessments in the field of biomedical research (with applications for research assessment in other disciplines), please see Anna R. Gagliardi, et al, "DORA-Compliant Measures of Research Quality..." *PLoS ONE* 18, no. 5 (2023): e0270616.

⁸ Appendix B, section 3, of HOP ADM 06-504 lists the basic dimensions of service activities expected of faculty.

⁹ See, for example, HOP ADM 06-504, Appendix A, Section 2.a, which states that department "guidelines must be in accordance with the general policy principles..."



Minimum Criteria in Teaching

The following minimum criteria helps guide faculty to understanding their progress toward attaining the principles and standards in Teaching delineated above. The minimum criteria pertain to their development of pedagogy, development of teaching skills, use of peer feedback on teaching, alignment of curricular practices to student needs, engagement with student learning outside the classroom, and their participation in the development of curricula.

Criterion 1: Faculty must demonstrate an expertise in curricular practices that result in student success

Guideline: Promotion to full professor requires that candidates demonstrate an established teaching approach rather than one that is primarily evolving. Reviewers value documentation of prior sustained success at facilitating student learning, engagement, and activities that demonstrate a sustained commitment to student success. Candidates should describe how they have applied effective teaching practices in the discipline and their identification and amelioration of barriers to student learning and engagement. Student evaluations and other student feedback can be used to document successful alignment of curricular practices to student needs.

Criterion 2: Faculty should demonstrate effective use of feedback on teaching.

Guideline: Candidates will include a discussion of continuous improvement made based on feedback from prior annual evaluations. Candidates must include a reflection on suggestions for improvement in response to the required peer observation of teaching every 3 years. The peer evaluation process is meant to be constructive and formative rather than summative. The candidate must show a reflection and/or incorporation in teaching. The Peer Observer Evaluative Report is provided to the faculty member only and is not included in the faculty member's report unless the faculty member requests in writing to include the report in the faculty member's dossier.

Criterion 3: Faculty must demonstrate a continued development of teaching skills.

Guideline: Successful candidates should have a narrative demonstrating established teaching strategies that directly improve student learning. This may include the incorporation of technology in teaching and/or the use of computational software when appropriate.

Criterion 4: If given an opportunity, has taught and contributed to core and/or advanced undergraduate, master's or doctoral level courses.

Guideline: Narratives should include a description of a faculty member's consistent contribution to the development and improvement of courses they are assigned, particularly advanced undergraduate, master's or doctoral level courses.

Criterion 5: Faculty must engage with students learning outside the classroom.

Guideline: This engagement may take many different forms and include but is not limited to leading students in research and creative activities, leading students' participation in service learning and/or community engagement activities, supervising clinical or field experiences, and/or mentoring students in career exploration and development, and/or facilitating their placement in jobs, graduate or professional programs.



Minimum Criteria in Research, Scholarship, and/or Creative Works

The following minimum criteria helps guide faculty to understanding their progress toward attaining the principles and standards in Research, Scholarship, and/or Creative Works delineated above. The minimum criteria pertain to the existence of a national reputation, their consistent record of accomplishment with increasing significance and impact, the sustainability and trajectory of their research/creative agenda, their scholarly independence, and the quality and impact of their work.

Criterion 1: Faculty should explain the significance of their scholarship and document their established recognized reputation in the professional research community.

Guideline: Faculty should demonstrate leadership in research-related activities, which may include research presentations at local seminars and colloquia, external research visits, and collaborations both within and outside of UTRGV. Documentation of prominence in their field should include on average at least one (1) invited or contributed outside research presentation delivered per year during the evaluation period.

Criterion 2: Faculty should demonstrate a consistent record of accomplishment and research leadership.

Guideline: The SMSS values quality research over quantity, and while no explicit minimum number is required, as a guideline six (6) papers may be used to demonstrate a consistent record. These should be papers published or accepted for publication where the candidate is an author or co-author who has made a significant contribution, according to the research field. These publications may appear in reputable peer reviewed venues, including journals, conference proceedings, and book chapters. Journal publications are especially valued. Faculty should explain how their publications fit into a cohesive established research program. This level of achievement will provide strong evidence of a consistent record of accomplishment and research leadership. Since quality is the primary consideration, numerical proxies alone should not be used to deny candidates, including those with fewer than six papers. The expected number of publications and other research contributions in reputable venues of justified quality and prestige shall be commensurate with the faculty research workload, with the given guidelines being appropriate for a 60% research workload on average over the evaluation period.

Criterion 3: The quality, relevance, and impact of candidates' scholarship must be evident and should reflect the record of a seasoned researcher in terms of both quantity and quality.

Guideline: The quality of published research is expected to be higher for promotion to full professor compared to tenure track. The evaluation of research shall prioritize the *quality of publications over their quantity*, where evidence of exceptional quality of publications may override numerical guidelines within the evaluation criteria. The assessment of publication quality shall be conducted in a holistic manner, considering the evidence presented by the candidate. The primary factor shall be the ranking and/or reputation of the venue (journal, conference proceedings, monograph) in which the publication appears (e.g., SCImago Journal Rank: Quartile and SJR (SCImago Journal Rank) metric, journal's impact factor, etc.). The acceptance of papers for publication in high-quality venues is based on qualitative expert review and considers qualitative, expert judgement. Additional factors that may be considered include, but are not limited to, referee reports, length, and/or substantiality of the publication, demonstrated impact of the publication (such as citations), authorship (single author or level of contribution to multi-authored papers where applicable).

Criterion 4: Faculty will demonstrate an established and sustained scholarly agenda

Guideline: Faculty will meet all of the following criteria at the end of their evaluation period:

- a. Actively search for external funding. The applications for funding should be competitive which can be justified, for example, by favorable reviews of external project proposals, indicating the competitiveness or fundability of the candidate's project or other feedback provided by the funding agency. Extramural funding applications should be considered relative to the need for and availability of such funding relative to the candidate's particular field of research. Funding for any projects that support the university's mission, vision, or core values can be used to document progress toward sustainability and/or broadening of the candidate's scholarly agenda.
- b. Sustainability can be demonstrated in several ways. Faculty should demonstrate the systematic accumulation of a body of work that builds on earlier research. An argument will be made as to the sustainability of the candidate's research. This could include a record of high productivity and/or justification of the potential for previous work to lead to future work; an expansion of the scope of research; building capacity and infrastructure for further long-term scholarly work; or service as Senior Personnel or Evaluator on major external grants.



Minimum Criteria in Service and Shared Governance

The following minimum criteria helps guide faculty to understanding their progress toward attaining the principles and standards in Service and Shared Governance delineated above. The minimum criteria pertain to their participation and leadership in service to student success, to university operations and shared governance, and to their profession and community.

Criterion: Candidates should demonstrate service that may include service to the profession, service to student success, and contributions to university operations and shared governance.

Guideline: Candidates should demonstrate participation and leadership in service to student success, to university operations and shared governance, and to their profession and community in the following three categories:

1. Leadership role in school, college, or university committees, programs, or national or international organizations.
2. Documented service contributions to school committees.
3. Professional and/or community service with demonstrated impact of leadership. Examples of Professional service may include, but are not limited to, editor of journal papers/journals, grant reviewer, session organizer at conferences, advisory committees/boards, or invited speaker at events requiring the faculty member's expertise.