

**PERSONNEL GUIDELINES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES**

Approved by Faculty on 28 March 2008

Preface

In the following guidelines the Faculty Review Committee (FRC) attempts to describe and accommodate some of the special circumstances of faculty engaged in interdisciplinary work whose salary lines are wholly, or at least one-half, in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Various types of appointments and areas of expertise among faculty may mean that reviews take place across two or more units, some within and some outside of the Department. The particular histories, methods, and identities of individual programs must be appropriately considered in review processes.

Rather than a checklist of criteria, the guidelines should be considered a useful way of mapping professional life within the Department and of enabling fair and reasonable review of faculty performance. Faculty members should consult the *Faculty Handbook* for other essential information regarding the matters discussed here.

Part I. The Tripartite Mission

The three-part mission of the university – teaching, research and service – is the basis of the university’s identity and the framework for evaluating faculty performance.

A. Instruction

University policy defines fulfillment of the instructional mission as central to faculty performance, and by “instruction” refers to 1) classroom teaching, 2) student advising, and 3) a variety of activities relevant to student learning. The latter may include joint research with students, advising on student learning projects, designing learning facilities or student labs, designing new pedagogical strategies, developing or revising curricula, setting up internships, creating computer-based learning units, writing teaching materials, guest lecturing, arranging for the visit of specialists in seminars or classrooms, etc.

Because the Department’s pedagogical mission is complex, many faculty teach in more than one discipline or program. IDST is built on the assumption that effective teaching includes the transmission of knowledge and the active promotion of the student’s ability to discover, reflect on, and convey information or ideas within an interdisciplinary framework. IDST values its role in shaping interdisciplinary pedagogical strategies through collegial participation in developing new courses and revising older ones, participating in programs designed to improve teaching, using new technologies, improving advising procedures, and creating a curriculum that takes advantage of the Department’s faculty resources. It is the policy of IDST to customize the evaluation of teaching to the context of the Department.

B. Scholarship and Creative Activity

Original research, creative work, and scholarly communication are fundamental to the mission

of the Department. The projects of IDST faculty and the media for intellectual and creative work range widely: performances, books, articles, exhibitions, reviews, critical editions, edited volumes, software productions, on-line publishing, invited lectures, conference presentations, multi-media events, etc. The audiences and processes vary as well. Projects may be invited, juried, collaborative, joint, and solo, while audiences may include specialists, generalists, discipline-based and cross-discipline colleagues. It is the policy of the Department to recognize the value of this range and variety of individual faculty accomplishments in its review.

C. Service and Outreach

All faculty members of the Department engage in service and outreach as part of their normal professional life. The university defines three areas of service. *Public service or outreach* is the use of professional skills associated with the faculty member's discipline for the benefit of citizens, civic groups, public and private organizations outside the university. *University service* denotes any activity other than teaching and research that facilitates the growth and development of the university, as well as the Department and its programs. *Professional service* consists of contributions to the advancement of scholarly organizations, professional communities, and discipline-based projects.

The Department has a broadly defined service and outreach mission that often overlaps both instruction and research. A faculty member's professional expertise may be required in collaborations with, or on behalf of, academic, institutional, or the larger community's social, political, educational, or economic goals. These activities may produce research, creative, or scholarly work that may also become part of the instructional effort. Similarly, administrative responsibilities within the Department may overlap service roles in the university community. It is the policy of the Department to encourage such overlapping collaborative relationships and activities and to recognize their value to the Department and its members.

Part II Performance Expectations

It is expected that all faculty will participate in the tripartite mission of the University (see part I above). In order to perform effectively and to be evaluated fairly, faculty in IDST need a clear understanding of what is expected of them in the areas of instruction, scholarship, service and outreach. Each faculty member should consult in advance with the Department's Chair and the relevant program director(s) on the range of professional activities appropriate for a review period. The FRC recognizes the importance of mentoring new faculty and urges Program Directors to make the necessary arrangements for such counseling.

The distribution of a faculty member's contribution among the three missions of the university may vary according to different appointments, divergent and modified research or artistic agendas, and changing needs of programs. In IDST these variations may include administrative responsibilities as well as teaching, course development, pedagogical innovation, research, artistic activity, service, and outreach. The relative weighing of responsibilities should be commensurate with the unique situations of faculty members.

It is the responsibility of each faculty member to submit accurate and adequate information in the annual Faculty Activities Report (FAR). The FAR should include an account of all relevant activities in the previous year. Since many activities correspond to the conventional requirements of teaching, scholarship and research, while many collaborative efforts tend to obscure the specific

accomplishments of individuals, the faculty member should supply commentary to the FAR to clarify particular situations.

Part III: Annual Faculty Review

The basis for determining merit pay increases, satisfactory progress toward tenure for tenure-track faculty, or for initiating a post-tenure review is the annual faculty review. This process is based on the Faculty Activity Report, curriculum vitae, and the teaching dossier, if available. The review will be conducted by the FRC and the Department Chair.

A. The Faculty Activities Report (FAR)

The Annual FAR, curriculum vitae and teaching dossier provide opportunity to report and describe activity in the three areas of instruction, scholarship, and service. The FAR recounts in some detail scholarly achievements, current research, public recognition, and service for the previous year. While solid evidence of achievement for the previous year is an important factor in the evaluation leading to salary adjustment, such evidence often cannot be culled exclusively from the year itself. Consequently, the Department Chair, the program directors and the FRC will examine a faculty member's progress over a longer period of time. To do otherwise would encourage concentration on quantity at the expense of quality.

Occasionally, specific items in the research section of the FAR would require a brief clarification for the benefit of colleagues in other programs who may not recognize their significance. While some contributions to service (a membership on active Department committees, for example) are self evident, others – such as participation in professional organizations or in the editorial process for journals and presses – often require explanation. The faculty member, therefore, should briefly clarify in the FAR those contributions to service that are not readily discernible as well as those of special importance within and outside the university during the academic year under review. Service commitments and activities should represent more than perfunctory participation by the faculty member. The specific quality of leadership or participation offered by the faculty member is ordinarily more significant than the number of committees.

B. Annual Evaluation Process

The FRC will read and discuss the Faculty Activity Reports of all faculty. All matters discussed by the FRC will be held in strict confidence. In general, tenured and tenure-track faculty will be evaluated in the three areas of instruction, scholarship, and service, and instructors will be evaluated in the area of instruction. The FRC will provide the IDST Chair with ratings for each faculty member in each of the appropriate areas. Ratings will reflect a 6-level scale: High, High-normal, Normal, Low-normal, Low, or Unsatisfactory (see Post-Tenure Review Policy).

The Department Chair will independently review the FARs of all Department faculty and the ratings provided by the FRC. The Department Chair will communicate the results of the annual evaluation in writing to each faculty member, and, if requested, will meet with faculty individually to discuss her/his activities. The Department Chair will be responsible for making recommendations for salary adjustment to the Dean. The Department Chair will also convey salary-adjustment information to the faculty member in writing.

Part IV: Faculty Appointments

The Department includes faculty at all ranks, part-time as well as full-time, tenured and untenured. Many faculty members who are employed by other departments in the university also teach on a regular basis in Department programs. This section describes several different types of faculty appointments in the Department. For a more detailed description of these positions and expectations consult the *Faculty Handbook*.

A. Non-tenure-track appointments: Restricted and Instructor Appointments

1. Restricted Appointments

Restricted appointments are those “for which there is no presumption or consideration of renewal” (*Faculty Handbook* 2.6.2). These include visiting professorships, one-year temporary appointments behind faculty on leave or behind vacant positions, and other temporarily available faculty. Some faculty on restricted appointments may later become regular faculty or instructors.

2. Instructor Appointments

Instructors are defined by the *Faculty Handbook* as “teaching professionals”; their primary assignment is “full responsibility for teaching undergraduate courses,” generally with “limited responsibility for other aspects of the standard faculty role, such as research or other scholarship, and service” (2.3.1.4).

Instructors play a vital role in many Department programs and have proven themselves to be dedicated, highly talented, and effective classroom teachers. Beyond giving the Department the opportunity to respond to unexpected shifts in course enrollment and faculty availability, instructors provide diversity of experience and expertise integral to the Department and not available through the limited number of tenure-track faculty positions. Considerable portions of the curriculum offered by some Department programs are staffed by instructors.

Regarding the appointment of instructor, the *Faculty Handbook* states “Initial appointment of instructors is normally for one year. Subsequent appointments may be for one or two years (subject to availability of General Assembly funding) and are not subject to the limitations of the pre-tenure probationary period.” Instructors may be full-or part-time; as a rule Department instructorships will be part-time (ranging from 1/4 to 3/4 time), although in some circumstances, determined by program need, the Department may appoint full-time instructors. Because of last-minute changes in funding and need, some courses will continue to be staffed on a per-course basis. However, recognizing the importance of job security and fair treatment, the Department will strive to offer, whenever possible, one-or two-year renewable contracts and to inform part-time faculty of course assignments in a timely fashion. Appointments used to replace full-time faculty on leave will be filled as determined by the directors of the affected programs in consultation with the Department Steering Committee.

The performance of instructors will be regularly evaluated, with emphasis on teaching. Renewal of contracts will be based on successful review as well as program needs and available funding.

B. Tenure Track and Tenured Appointments: Assistant, Associate and Full Professors

Instructional faculty (as distinct from “research” or “administrative” faculty) in regular appointments are employed full-time and are tenured or tenure-track.

1. Tenure-Track Assistant and Associate Professors

Tenure-track assistant and associate professors are hired with an initial probationary appointment of three years. Reviews of probationary faculty will normally be conducted during the spring of the third and fall of the fifth year of service by an ad hoc committee comprised of a member of the candidate’s program, an FRC member, and one member outside the Department. After consulting with the FRC, the results of the ad hoc committee’s review and the committee’s recommendation will be communicated to the Department Chair in writing.

The pre-tenure reviews should analyze the faculty member’s progress toward promotion and tenure and offer guidance regarding future activities and plans. All reviews must be in writing, with the faculty member acknowledging receipt by signing and returning a copy for his or her departmental file. In addition, the promotion and tenure committee and the department chair will meet with the faculty member to discuss the review and recommendations. Individual faculty members are also encouraged to seek guidance and mentoring from senior colleagues and the department chair. Pretenure faculty members bear responsibility for understanding departmental expectations for promotion and tenure and for meeting those expectations.

Reappointment is based on a number of factors, including professional accomplishment and the likelihood of success in achieving tenure during the mandatory review year, indicated by adequate progress in research (for example, publications in peer reviewed journals and books, performances, substantial progress toward a book manuscript, conference papers presented), a strong teaching record, and a reasonable amount of service.) However, reappointment also depends on the present and future needs of the programs in which the faculty member teaches. Assistant professors should have a clear understanding with the Department Chair and relevant program directors each year about their progress toward reappointment. During the second, third, and fifth years of the probationary period, peer reviews of teaching must take place (see Part VI).

Semester Release Policy for Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

In order to provide support for tenure-track assistant professors during a critical stage in their research and to help them strengthen their case for promotion and tenure, the Department shall grant all tenure-track assistant professors one semester of paid release time from all teaching and service obligations. This semester release can be taken between the second and fifth year of appointment in the Department, with the exact semester determined by the faculty member in consultation with the Department Chair and relevant program director(s). Faculty who have hitherto not had a semester release and whose third-year review leads to a recommendation of nonrenewal of contract shall not be eligible for this release time. Release requests granted under this policy should be made as far in advance as possible, but normally no later than 1 February for releases during the following fall term and 1 October for releases during the following spring term. The period of release time granted under this policy will count in determining the faculty member’s term of service to the University for mandatory tenure and promotion review as well as university-sponsored research and study leaves.

Faculty granted release time under this policy:

- Are encouraged to seek grants, fellowships, and other means of internal and external support to extend their leave beyond one semester,
- Remain eligible to compete for departmental research and travel funds,
- Are not required to remain in residence during the period of their release time,
- May not hold a teaching assignment at this or any other institution during the semester they have been granted release time,
- Are expected to return to their regular faculty responsibilities at Virginia Tech at the end of their release time, and
- Are required on conclusion of their leave to submit to the Department Chair and relevant program director(s) a one paragraph report on their accomplishments during their leave.

2. Tenured Associate and Full Professors

Most associate professors have been tenured and promoted. Thereafter they are evaluated annually for merit-pay increases, but may or may not choose to become candidates for promotion to full professor. All tenured faculty are subject to the provisions stipulated in the IDST statement of Post-tenure Review Policies and Procedures and Statement of Faculty Obligations and Standards.

Both associate professors and full professors will maintain a documented record of teaching evaluation as well as other professional achievement. Achieving the rank of full professor requires an evaluation and promotion process similar to that of tenure, including outside review of scholarship. Candidates for full professor must have a superior record of mature scholarship or artistic production, substantial teaching record, and considerable service contribution. Senior faculty members (both associate and full professors) have responsibility for providing multifaceted leadership in the university as well as for mentoring younger faculty members.

Part V: Tenure and Promotion Procedures

The *Faculty Handbook* includes considerable detail regarding tenure and promotion requirements, preparation of the dossier, and university procedures for evaluating candidates (Section 2.8). The faculty member should gain a full understanding of the timetable, and of university requirements, for promotion from the Department Chair, who also furnishes the ad hoc committee with the candidate's dossier. The guidelines below pertain specifically to the promotion and tenure processes within the purview of the Department.

Candidates for tenure and promotion will be evaluated on the basis of their accomplishments

and contributions in instruction, research and service. The FRC oversees the promotion and tenure process for candidates whose positions are fully or substantially funded by the Department. This includes assisting the Department Chair in forming ad hoc personnel committees for individual candidates, acting as liaison with disciplinary departments, and serving on ad hoc or departmental personnel committees as needed. The procedures for tenure and promotion in the Department are necessarily somewhat flexible, yet they should be also predictable.

The promotion and tenure process will reflect the circumstances and performance expectations of the individual faculty appointment in consultation with the appropriate Program Director and faculty member. The scope and focus of the appointment will be spelled out as clearly as possible in advance so that all parties involved (faculty member, Department administration and any external departments or units) will be able to anticipate whatever is necessary to ensure a fair and appropriate treatment of each candidate.

When the faculty member's position is located entirely or substantially in the Department, the review will be conducted by an ad hoc personnel committee appointed by the Department Chair. In following the guidelines of the *Faculty Handbook* (sect. 2.8.4.1), the dossier will be prepared by the Chair or by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. If the faculty member has teaching responsibilities or other formal connections with departments outside of the Department, the ad hoc committee will include appropriate representation from those areas. The following guidelines apply primarily to committee structure and procedures when tenure or promotion is to be awarded within the Department.

The ad hoc committee for tenure and promotion will be appointed in the Spring prior to the review, according to guidelines in the *Faculty Handbook*. The committee will normally consist of five voting members, all of whom must be tenured. One member will be appointed by the FRC as its representative. Relevant program directors will ordinarily be voting members of the ad hoc committee, if they are tenured. The remaining members will be appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with the FRC and the program director. The Department Chair will meet with the ad hoc committee but will not vote in committee deliberations.

The FRC will review the composition of the ad hoc committee prior to the review. At least three of the committee members should be Department faculty, with representation from the programs in which the faculty member is most involved (including, but not limited to, relevant program directors). The additional members can be selected as needed to ensure adequate representation of the candidate's professional expertise or of the Department as a whole.

Typically, during the Spring term preceding consideration, the relevant program directors and the ad hoc committee will recommend a list of potential external reviewers to the Department Chair and the ad hoc committee. The Department Chair and the ad hoc Committee Chair will also ensure that the candidate's materials for outside review are appropriately assembled. The Department Chair or the chair of the ad hoc committee will secure agreements from outside reviewers.

The Chair of the ad hoc committee appointed by the Department Chair will prepare the dossier. The ad hoc committee Chair will ensure that all supplementary materials are well assembled and available in a form consistent with the requirement of the *Faculty Handbook*. This includes all documentation concerning teaching, research and service. The FRC should identify and address any elements of the dossier that specifically relate to the interdisciplinary nature of the Department. The dossier should convey effectively the candidate's professional achievements to the entire audience participating in the review, including college and university committees as well as the ad hoc committee.

The ad hoc committee will solicit letters and comments from Department faculty and others familiar with the candidate's record, who are able to address the candidate's contributions to the Department and, when appropriate, to other units. The committee will review and discuss all assembled materials, including the candidate's scholarship or creative production, outside reviewers' letters, published reviews of the candidate's work, evidence of teaching effectiveness and contribution to service, and other supporting materials. The committee will vote on the case, in the absence of the Department Chair, and will draft a letter to the Dean presenting its recommendation. The recommendation and a summary of the findings will be reported to the FRC and to the Department Chair. The ad hoc committee will assist the Department Chair in assembling the final dossier for transmission to the college level.

The Department Chair will make a separate recommendation on each case, including in the dossier a letter of support or non-support addressed to the Dean.

The basic procedure for promotion to full professor is similar to that of tenure, but it assumes a significantly more mature level of achievement. Promotion includes outside review and evaluation at the departmental, college and university levels. Candidates for full professor should have established a record of distinction and superior quality, according to the standards of the Department and its cross-disciplinary community. Candidates for promotion should have a well-documented record of student and peer teaching evaluation since their last promotion. Full professors contribute substantial service to the university, based on their maturity, experience and expertise in academic life. The public as well as the academy normally expects that full professors will provide effective intellectual leadership both within and beyond the university community.

Part VI. Evaluation of Teaching

The purpose of teaching evaluation is to promote thoughtful and innovative approaches to pedagogy on the one hand, and to provide an effective basis for annual review of faculty at all ranks as well as for reappointment, tenure, and promotion, on the other. Current research suggests that while these general purposes overlap, good teaching evaluation processes make certain critical distinctions between them.

“Formative” evaluation provides response concerning classroom behaviors, course materials and other elements of instruction to help shape and improve the future efforts of the faculty member. The results of such evaluation may or may not become part of the personnel file. “Summative” evaluation provides administrators and personnel committees with a summary or profile of teaching effectiveness over a period of time, for judicious use in faculty review and promotion processes. The teaching evaluation processes proposed here take these differences into consideration at a practical level, particularly with respect to how faculty members document teaching activities and how Department administrators and personnel committees connect peer review with promotion, tenure, and merit raise processes.

Overseeing the teaching evaluation process will be the responsibility of the FRC.

A. The Teaching Dossier

Each faculty member is urged to maintain a current teaching dossier. A fundamental part of all review processes, the teaching dossier will provide key information on teaching activities

and a perspective on the faculty member's long-term contribution to the instructional mission of the Department. The dossier (ordinarily 5 to 7 pages) may include the following:

A narrative summary of teaching goals and activities

A roster and description of courses taught

- Descriptions of course development projects and other curricular activities, including grants, publications, teaching awards, conference presentations, and research related a pedagogy

Teaching dossiers may also include materials such as the following:

Representative samples of course materials

Summaries of student evaluation data collected over a period of several years, including the most recent available information.

Selected letters from peer reviews

Selected letters from former students

Student Evaluations

Most Department faculty administer student evaluations each term using a standardized form. All teachers must administer student teaching evaluations in every course during the academic year and record these in the FAR and teaching dossier. Failure to provide evidence of student evaluation may negatively affect the evaluation of teaching.

C. Peer Evaluation

Frequency and Use of Peer Reviews

1 Faculty at all ranks can choose to have the FRC arrange a peer review (that is, a formative review) at any time, with or without the component of classroom observation. The results of such voluntary reviews will not go into the personnel file unless the faculty member so requests. The FRC encourages all faculty to take advantage of this form of peer review every three to four years.

2 In the first year of service an informal (but mandatory) peer evaluations of all faculty provides an initial assessment of teaching. The peer reviewer(s) will provide the Department Chair with a statement indicating that the first-year informal review has taken place. Mandatory (that is, summative reviews) take place as follows: Probationary tenure-track faculty receive peer reviews in the second, third, and fifth year of the probationary period, with the peer review reports becoming part of the personnel file. Instructors receive peer reviews in the second year and every third year thereafter (i.e., fifth, eighth, etc.), with the peer review reports becoming part of the personnel file.

3 Associate professors who wish to become candidates for full professor should have peer evaluation of their teaching. It is preferable to have such review carried out more than one year prior to candidacy.

4 Faculty who might be nominated for college-and university-level teaching awards should have regular peer evaluation of their teaching.

5 Promotion and tenure dossiers will include the peer review reports and the teaching dossier. Faculty members may choose to incorporate into the teaching dossier letters from peer review committees, or assessments from individual committee members and other faculty who know their teaching.

Guidelines

1 Peer review is conducted by an ad hoc teaching review committee composed of two or three faculty members, including one selected by the faculty member in consultation with the program

director(s) and one or two by the FRC. The person designated by the FRC will ensure the submission of the report by the end of the term in which the review has taken place.

2 The ad hoc peer review committee meets with the teacher to determine the scope of the review, and finds an appropriate time for classroom visits. The teacher conveys to the committee any specific areas of comment she or he may wish to receive concerning course materials, presentation, content, etc. One focus of the peer review is on the teaching dossier, if available. The committee examines the dossier in terms of the faculty member's stated teaching responsibilities and goals.

3 Classroom visitations take place after the committee has familiarized itself with the instructional program of the faculty member. These visits need not be for an extended period of time, but they should occur over more than one class period, according to an agreed-upon schedule. The purpose of the classroom visits is to gain direct knowledge of the presentational approach of the faculty member and to provide constructive opinion about specific classroom practices and behaviors.

4 The ad hoc committee may meet with the teacher to discuss the review and any matters pertaining to teaching that it might have raised.

5 For formative reviews, the committee will share its individual letters with the faculty member. For summative reviews, the committee will prepare a report consisting of individual letters, or a joint letter, on the peer review. The report will include a brief description of the process and, when appropriate, a summary of the opinions conveyed to the faculty member and of his/her response. The report will include any other material that effectively conveys the committee's evaluation of the faculty member's teaching. The committee will give a copy of the report to the teacher, who may respond to it in writing. The faculty member may request that her/his response be included in the peer review report. The written report and the response, if any, will be submitted to the Department chair and to the relevant program director(s).