

FACULTY OF FORESTRY

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING IN PROMOTION AND TENURE DECISIONS

A. Information to be provided by the Candidate:

1. A list of teaching assignments over the past five years.
2. A description of teaching methods and/or texts developed and/or other pedagogical vehicles utilized.
3. A complete list of graduate students for whom the candidate has been the principal supervisor.
4. A list of awards for which the candidate has been nominated and/or which have been received for teaching.

B. Information to be solicited/provided by the Faculty:

1. All available teaching evaluations.
2. Letters from current and former undergraduate students commenting on the candidate's ability to stimulate and challenge the student's intellectual curiosity and on his/her mastery of the subject area. Normally, a random sample of approximately 100 students (where possible) should be solicited for opinions, to be addressed, in writing, to the Dean.
3. Letters from current and former graduate students commenting on the candidate's ability to stimulate and challenge their intellectual curiosity and, where appropriate, upon the candidate's effectiveness as a supervisor of graduate student research.
4. Where the candidate has participated in shared courses, letters attesting to the teaching competence of the candidate should be sought from colleagues in those courses.
5. Information on how much teaching the candidate has done at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Where the amount of teaching varies from the norms of the Faculty, the extent of the difference and the reasons for it should be explained.
6. The extent of the candidate's supervision of graduate students at both the masters and doctoral levels.
7. In cases of persons who are being newly appointed from outside the University, information from the institutions in which they have taught with an indication of how this teaching experience compares with our requirements of internal candidates.

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Teaching includes lecturing, activity in seminars and tutorials, individual and group discussion, laboratory and field teaching, and any other means by which students derive educational benefit. Teaching is also directed toward persons outside the University through adult education courses, television and radio addresses or interviews, public speeches, and the like, although teaching of this nature is of secondary importance to the primary teaching activities inside the University. Informal teaching situations such as counseling and supervising graduate students also comprise an important aspect of an instructor's responsibilities.

Teaching effectiveness is demonstrated by the degree to which the teacher is able to stimulate and challenge the intellectual capacity of students, to communicate academic material and to maintain a mastery of his/her subject area. The teacher should also be accessible to students and be able to influence their intellectual development and development of critical skills.

DATA FOR EVALUATION

The primary purpose of evaluation in relation to these guidelines is to provide assistance in decision-making concerning tenure and promotion. These Faculty guidelines are a requirement of and addendum to the latest University's "Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments" and "Policy and Procedures Governing Promotions".

The chairman of either the tenure or promotion committee meeting being planned is ultimately responsible for the completeness and content of the documentation presented to the committee concerned for consideration. However, since candidates for tenure and promotion are aware of their impending consideration several years in advance of the actual meetings, they should be prepared to provide that part of the documentation that is the candidate's responsibility. A continuing appraisal of teaching effectiveness over a period of years is essential for any systematic approach by instructors to the improvement of their teaching and the required evidence is essential for an in-depth evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

Only the individual staff member can realistically be expected to know in detail the strategy of each of his courses, the successes and failures of all his teaching experiments, the nature of his preparations, notes, materials, etc. Improvement of teaching and evaluation of it, to be successful, must come primarily and willingly from him. Therefore, within the guidelines agreed to by the entire division or department, the individual staff member should set his own personal goals and fit the methods of evaluation to them in keeping with his own judgement of suitability....Over the years he will therefore accumulate the evidence of the results of his teaching and he will be prepared to present a synopsis of this to the tenure or appointments committee at the appropriate time. (Report of the Working Group on Teaching Evaluation, University of Toronto, 1976).

As many of the following sources of information as are available (specifically items (a), (b) and (d) as a minimum) and appropriate will be used to appraise a candidate's teaching effectiveness; the order of listing does not indicate relative importance.

- (a) Instructor's teaching portfolio;
- (b) Student course evaluations, as comprehensive and objective as possible;
- (c) Individual student ratings, by letter, as deemed necessary by committee chairman;
- (d) Peer evaluation, formal assessments (internal and external) including other departmental, divisional or college assessments where cross-appointment is involved.

(a) Instructor's Teaching Portfolio

As a minimum, the candidate's teaching portfolio should contain the individual's curriculum vitae (as detailed in the University's policies and procedures), course outlines, bibliographies, etc. The portfolio may also contain other documents relating to teaching as the individual deems appropriate. See Policies and Procedures on Academic Appointments, Section #15.

(b) Student Course Evaluations

Student evaluation systems, for the most part, are straightforward vehicles by which students may react to the learning (teaching) experience which they have undergone. Because the results of such evaluations can be expressed numerically, there is a tendency to give them greater weight than methods of evaluation which rely on judgements, impression, or instinct. In the words of the Working Group Report:

The results tend to be consistent from year to year but they also bear a far from satisfactory correlation with learning achieved, as measured objectively, and consequently are to be used circumspectly.

(c) Individual Student Ratings by Letter

If the chairman of the tenure or promotion committee considers it necessary and appropriate for the candidate under consideration, individual students may be asked by the chairman to provide confidential assessments regarding the instructor's teaching effectiveness. This form of evaluation would be particularly necessary for "special" small-enrolment types of courses that are not represented by organized course evaluation results, e.g., fourth year theses, special topics courses, some electives, graduate courses. Letters could also be solicited from students for courses taught as a "service" in other divisions where organized course evaluations are not carried out regularly.

(d) Peer Evaluation

Formal written assessments of a candidate's teaching effectiveness may be solicited by the committee chairman in cases where the c.v. indicates the candidate has been in a position that would make it appropriate for another staff member to comment on effectiveness, e.g., where the candidate participates in team-teaching a course, or where the candidate has been invited to give a guest lecture in another staff member's course. A staff member who has observed a candidate's teaching performance should be prepared to provide a written statement of appraisal on request by the committee chairman. In all cases, an attempt will be made to obtain a sufficient number of opinions so that individual biases will be minimized.

In this Faculty, classroom visits by colleagues for the specific purpose of evaluating teaching performance should be made only on invitation of the instructor. Otherwise, aside from the time-consuming nature of such visits, which must be repeated to be valid, a situation is created which may threaten the validity of the observations.

In addition, some peer evaluation by individual committee members will be based on less tangible evidence: casual conversation with the instructor, student comments, rumour and the like. Analysis of evidence of this sort and its integration with evidence from other sources requires mature judgement on the part of members of the committee.

PROCEDURES FOR GATHERING AND ASSESSING DATA

Collection

The Dean (or designate), as chairman of Faculty tenure committees and promotion committees, is responsible for the collection and completeness of evaluation data from students and the candidate's peers.

The candidate is responsible for submitting a teaching portfolio and course evaluation results, as appropriate, to the chairman by November 1 of the year preceding spring consideration for tenure or January consideration for promotion. Course evaluations received by the candidate after November 1 may be submitted up to the meeting date but the bulk of the portfolio must be received by November 1 so that individual student and peer evaluations can be solicited.

Evaluation

Prior to a tenure or promotion committee meeting the chairman will establish an internal evaluation committee to assess the data collected, including that related to teaching effectiveness. This committee shall be responsible for providing a written statement on the candidate's teaching effectiveness for consideration by the promotion or tenure committee. The chairman shall appoint staff to the internal evaluation committee as deemed appropriate but membership will normally include the chairmen of the following Faculty standing committees as a minimum: Teaching Methods, Research, and Graduate Department of Forestry.

In promotion and tenure considerations the internal evaluation committee will be required to act between December 15 and the meeting date, at a point to begin when the chairman of the committee judges that most of the appraisal documentation has been received.

General

Candidates are referred to the University's "Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments" and the "Policy and Procedures Governing Promotions" for regulations governing the candidate's response to a negative recommendation.

Confidentiality

The chairman shall prepare and provide a brief summary of the content of appraisals and evaluations, without identifying their sources, to the candidate prior to the committee meeting (Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments", Section #14).

The deliberations of the internal evaluation committee and the tenure and promotions committees, plus the appraisals presented to these committees, will remain confidential.