

## Faculty Mentoring for Promotion & Tenure: 2- and 4-Year Peer Reviews

*“Since promotion and tenure recommendations are heavily dependent on peer evaluations, it is essential that candidates have early indications from their colleagues regarding their progress in the areas of teaching, research, and creative activity, and service.” UD Faculty Handbook 4.3.5*

[UD Faculty Climate Survey](#) data and [UD ADVANCE research](#) suggest low levels of satisfaction surrounding promotion and tenure (P&T) processes and clarity of expectations at UD. This research also suggests a heavy reliance on institutional memory, which can result in shifting standards.

Some UD faculty report 2- and 4-year peer reviews are an important way of learning about P&T, but experiences vary considerably across and within departments. This suggests that peer review is an opportunity to mentor candidates – and that departments should review and discuss their peer review processes to help clarify P&T. This should include developing or revising the department’s written protocols for peer review. Written protocols are important for equity, as they ensure the process is standardized and that all faculty have access to the same information.

This document is a resource for departments seeking to formalize their 2- and 4-year peer review processes as a means of clarifying P&T procedures and expectations. It could also be used to formalize post-tenure review as a mentoring opportunity for faculty seeking promotion to full professor. *The questions posed below are designed to facilitate discussion within departments.*

### **Purpose of Peer Review**

Before you begin conversations about improving the 2- and 4-year peer review process, it can be helpful to reflect on the purpose of these reviews:

- Is the peer review process currently serving to mentor junior faculty about P&T?
- What are some ways that the peer review process can better prepare candidates for P&T?

#### *Recommendations:*

- Treat the review as more than contract renewal but also as an opportunity to help the candidate understand P&T processes and expectations.
- Develop or revisit and, if needed, revise departmental protocols that guide peer review. More detailed recommendations about formalization can be found later in this document.

### **Evaluation Standards and Materials to be Reviewed**

The first step in thinking about possible improvements to peer review is for faculty to reflect on:

- What are the peer review evaluation criteria and how is success measured?
- What materials do candidates need to submit for a fair and comprehensive review?
- Do you have a list of recommended, or required, evidentiary materials?
- Are candidates expected to format their materials in a particular way?

#### *Recommendations:*

- Ensure that the standards for 2-/4-year peer review are sufficiently robust so as to help a candidate understand whether they are on track for promotion.
- The materials candidates submit for peer review should reflect (though need not be identical to) the dossier they will submit for P&T.
- Make sure what you are asking for reflects their tenure status and workload.

## Communication Among the Reviewers

To ensure a smooth peer review, make sure that everyone is on the same page:

- How does the department ensure all reviewers understand the process, timeline, and criteria?

*Recommendations:*

- Committees should meet early, prior to meeting with the candidate, to review processes and standards. This is particularly important for committees with new members.

## Communication with Candidates

It is also important to communicate the procedures and expectations to the candidate:

- Does anyone meet with the candidate to review the P&T document?
- Who informs the candidate of the review process, timeline, materials, and requirements?

*Note: different aspects of the process might be communicated by different people.*

*Recommendations:*

- Encourage candidates to learn about peer review, and more broadly P&T, early and often. This can be through formal mentoring, colleagues' sharing of materials, etc.
- A committee member should meet with the candidate early to discuss the process and review the P&T guidelines.

## Feedback for Candidates

The final step of the peer review process is post-review feedback for the candidate:

- What information should be included in the post-review feedback to the candidate?
- What format should the communication take?
- What are the pros and cons of including negative feedback in a written document? Should your department also rely on non-written formal mechanisms for feedback?
- Who prepares and delivers this feedback?

*Recommendations:*

- Find a formal means to provide feedback that will help the candidate grow and improve. This should include a meeting where the candidate can discuss their progress in more detail and learn about feedback that may not have been included in their letter.
- Negative feedback should be phrased constructively so that candidates can act on it and address progress in their next review.
- Candidates should follow up later with mentors on their progress.

## Formalization

Many departments lack formalized procedures for peer review. This may lead to overreliance on institutional memory, which can be particularly problematic in cases such as chair turnover or departments with a relative lack of more senior scholars.

*Recommendations:*

- Departments should formalize their peer review procedures and standards. This may include adding language about 2-/4-year reviews in P&T documents: purpose, timeline, procedures, etc.
- This may also include internal departmental documents or written guidelines surrounding topics like candidate communication, formal means for feedback, etc.
- Ensure policies and procedures take into account not only prototypical candidates, but also faculty with atypical workloads, interdisciplinary research, split lines, etc.