College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Tenure & Promotion Application Guidelines/F.A.Q.

Q: Where can I find information about the requirements for my application?
A: Start with the first two links at the University of Maine System (UMS) page on tenure and promotion at http://www.maine.edu/about-the-system/system-office/academic-affairs/tenure-and-promotion/ and also visit the UMaine page, http://umaine.edu/hr/employees/faculty-specific-resources/. Also be sure to review your departmental promotion and tenure guidelines at https://umaine.edu/provost/departmental-evaluation-criteria/. A meeting with your department chair very early in the process of preparing your application is strongly recommended.

Q: Do I have to use a specific form to present my materials?
A: Yes. On the UMS page listed above, there is a link to a Word document that provides the required template for your tenure or promotion application. For instructions on preparing your document, refer to the “Tenure Application Process” document on the same UMS page.

Q: The template seems fussy and awkward. Do I really have to follow it?
A: Yes.

Q: What should I do if some part of the application is irrelevant to my situation?
A: Include the heading as stipulated in the template, followed by “Not applicable.” Instructions should be deleted, but do not delete any headings or sections of the application.

Q: Am I responsible for obtaining the signatures in the “Record of Actions” on p. 2 of the template?
A: No. Signatures will be added as appropriate in the course of review.

Q: Who should I ask to verify the summary of my teaching evaluations on p. 5 of the template?
A: Your department chair or equivalent.

Q: Do I need to let somebody know that I am going up for promotion?
A: It depends. Tenure-track faculty members must go up for promotion and tenure on a set schedule, so they do not need to inform anyone unless they intend to use previously awarded prior credit. The Dean’s Office should be notified before the end of the spring semester if a faculty member intends to use prior credit to apply the following fall. Associate professors seeking promotion to professor must notify their department chair no later than September 15, contractually. For practical purposes, the notification should occur by early summer so as to allow adequate time to plan solicitation of external letters.

Q: I have heard that someone in the Dean’s Office or HR will check my application for mistakes. Is that true?
A: HR staff members no longer check applications. The Dean’s Office staff will confirm that the application includes all major required components. However, your application will not be checked for other mistakes, such as typos, errors in grammar and punctuation, format problems, missing page numbers, or excessive length. It is your responsibility to ensure that the application is properly formatted, within page limits, and free of errors and inconsistencies. Failure to do so leaves a very poor impression. A signed checklist confirming that the application is correct and complete is expected.

Q: When is my application due to the peer committee?
A: The first week of October. Specific deadlines vary slightly by year. Solicitation of external letters should be done in a timely fashion so that these letters are available when the peer committee begins its deliberation. See below for details.
Q: How many years of activities and accomplishments may I include?
A: In the tenure application itself, you should include only the past five years of work, unless your probationary period has been extended (“stop the clock”). For full professor applications, include all work since your promotion to associate professor. Your CV will incorporate earlier work—but remember that the CV is included for on-campus review only. The application must tell your story on its own, without the help of the appendix.

Q: How should I document the success of my teaching?
A: At minimum, provide on p. 5 of the application form a table in which your student teaching evaluation scores are compared with college means. The table to use may be downloaded here: https://umaine.edu/has/resource/teaching-evaluation/. The Office of Institutional Research (ext. 1-1411, debra.allen@maine.edu) will supply college and university student evaluation ratings for use in the table; your own evaluation scores may be obtained from the Office of Assessment (ext. 1-1313, lisa.henderson@maine.edu). If evaluations are uncharacteristically poor for a particular class or semester, provide an explanation.

You are encouraged to provide objective evidence of your teaching performance besides students’ numerical evaluations. For example, you might invite a senior colleague to observe your teaching and supply a report. If students’ comments are provided in your application, they must have been signed and must be provided anonymously in your application. Typically, such comments add little useful information. Course syllabi and other course materials may be included.

Q: Will the committees and administrators reviewing my application have other information available?
A: Yes. They may review material from your personnel file, examine your publications, consult your department chair, and take other appropriate steps to ensure a full and accurate view of your accomplishments. It is a good idea to check that your personnel file is complete before you submit your application.

Q: Are applications submitted electronically or as hard copy?
A: Both. The Dean’s Office will create an electronic folder for you to use in submitting materials to the College. The same folder can be used by the peer committee and department chair if requested. Consult your chair for departmental expectations with regard to electronic submission. Certain elements of the application must also be submitted to the College in hard copy. These are: the application form itself, including the standard table for teaching evaluations; your CV, which is technically an appendix to the application form; external reviewers’ letters, including your cover sheets; letters from the peer committee and chair; and the signed checklist. Hard copy materials must be single-sided and all letters must be originals on letterhead, not copies.

Q: How many external review letters do I need and how should they be solicited?
A: Three letters are required but more should be solicited. For instructions on obtaining them, see below. In particular, please note that letters are not confidential and that reviewers must be informed that you will have access to the letters.

Q: How are external review letters added to my application?
A: Letters will be added by the department chair (or sometimes the peer committee chair). Copies will be given to you as well. For each letter, you must include the following information on a cover sheet:
1. The evaluator’s name and institution.
2. A statement of the evaluator’s relationship with you. That relationship should not be close. Close collaborators or former advisors are not appropriate external evaluators.
3. A very brief explanation of the evaluator’s qualifications as an external reviewer.

Q: Are internal letters of support (i.e., from UMaine or UMS colleagues) required?
A: No. You may include them if you wish.

Q: Who reviews my application?
A: Review begins with your peer committee. The peer committee’s recommendation is forwarded to the chair, who also reviews the application and writes a recommendation. The dean and provost each write a letter, in sequence, with input from an advisory committee at each level. For promotion to professor, the president’s decision is final. For tenure, the president’s recommendation is forwarded to the chancellor and then to the Board of Trustees, which makes the final decision.

Remember that only your application itself and the associated letters, but not the appendix, are provided for off-campus review. Many of the people reading your application will be unfamiliar with your discipline. The narrative portions of your application should provide context to clarify the significance of your activities and achievements.

Q: What is the basis for evaluation of my application?
A: Your performance is evaluated with reference to your duties as assigned and to the promotion and tenure guidelines (a.k.a., departmental evaluation criteria) that apply to your situation.

Q: Will I be informed of recommendations at each stage of review?
A: Yes, you will be copied on each letter. You also have a right to respond to the peer committee letter.

Soliciting External Review Letters

Outside review letters are crucial to the success of the application. The review letters provide an independent, expert assessment of scholarship and standing in the discipline.

First, start early! Letter writers should be identified and contacted no later than June. They expect several months’ notice. They will need to see not only your CV but also samples of your scholarly work. Allow time to prepare these materials unhurriedly.

Outside evaluators should be chosen carefully to ensure that:

- The evaluator’s objectivity is not open to challenge because of a relationship to the candidate. Avoid asking former mentors and classmates, collaborators, colleagues at previous institutions, personal friends, or others who might give the appearance of less than complete objectivity.
- The evaluator holds at least the rank for which the candidate is being considered.
- The evaluator is professionally recognized within the discipline and is affiliated with an institution at least comparable to UMaine.

Practices for soliciting letters vary by department; either the department chair (ordinarily) or peer committee chair (in some instances) will contact evaluators on your behalf. Because some prospective evaluators may not agree to write a letter, more than the required three evaluators should be contacted. Take the opportunity to suggest names of recommenders to your department chair as appropriate. If your responsibilities are atypical in any way (for example, you have a specific administrative assignment), speak with whoever is soliciting letters about how these unusual circumstances will be communicated to evaluators. Sample solicitation letters are provided to department chairs by the Dean’s Office.

Evaluators must be notified that the review letters are not confidential and will be shared with the candidate. Evaluators’ letters must be signed and on letterhead.

Updated 6/13/18