College of Liberal Arts: Promotion and Tenure Guide for Assistant Professors

Guidelines: Criteria, Policies, and Procedures

The University of Nevada, Reno is part of the Nevada System of Higher Education and is governed by its Board of Regents. The NSHE Code is incorporated into faculty contracts. The NSHE Board of Regents Handbook establishes major NSHE procedures; the University of Nevada, Reno Bylaws establish major UNR procedures. Both NSHE and UNR procedures and policies govern university practices. Colleges, schools, and departments have bylaws and internal policies that govern practices within those units.

For NSHE procedures and policies, see:

Board of Regents Handbook (Title 2 is the NSHE Code)
http://system.nevada.edu/Nshe/index.cfm/administration/board-of-regents/handbook/

Board of Regents Procedures and Guidelines Manual
http://system.nevada.edu/Nshe/index.cfm/administration/board-of-regents/procedures-guidelines-manual/

For UNR procedures and policies, see:

University of Nevada, Reno Bylaws
https://www.unr.edu/faculty-senate/university-bylaws

University Administrative Manual
http://www.unr.edu/administrative-manual

For College, School, and Department procedures and policies, see their bylaws and additional policy documents. The Faculty Senate maintains a list of the major unit bylaws:
https://www.unr.edu/faculty-senate/university-bylaws

If you have questions about policies and procedures, start by contacting the responsible party in your department or college, typically the chair, Associate Dean (overseeing Faculty matters), or Dean.

Annual evaluations and progress toward tenure letters

During your “probationary” period, tenure-track Assistant Professors will be evaluated annually in two ways: the annual evaluation of job performance and the annual progress-toward-tenure letter.

1. The NSHE Code, Chapter 5, Section 5.12.1 and 5.12.2, establishes that written performance evaluations of academic faculty and administrative faculty shall be conducted at least once each calendar year by department chairs, supervisors or heads of administrative units. One of the purposes of annual performance evaluations is to provide constructive, developmental feedback to the faculty member. (B/R 9/05) 2. All
performance evaluations shall include a rating of “excellent,” “commendable,” “satisfactory,” or “unsatisfactory.” No other rating terminology shall be used. The areas of evaluation and procedures for evaluation of academic faculty and administrative faculty are established in institutional bylaws (UNR Bylaws 3.3.2). Evaluations of instructional faculty shall include an assessment of teaching evaluations completed by their students. All annual evaluation reports must be generated using the Digital Measures software package: https://library.unr.edu/DigitalMeasures/login.aspx

For more information about annual evaluations, see:
https://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr-faculty-eval/AdminFacGoverningPoliciesProcedures.pdf

2. Annual progress-toward-tenure letters are based on an academic year, except for the third-year review, which represents a thorough, cumulative review of performance to date. They are “criteria-referenced” and done with an eye toward how well you are meeting the ultimate standards for promotion and tenure specified in university, college, and department bylaws. They should provide formative judgments that help you know how your case for promotion and tenure is developing and what you still need to do. The third-year review process will likely conclude with a meeting between you, the department chair, and the dean to review the third-year record and discuss expectations and process for the remainder of the probationary period.

3. The NSHE Code requires that annual evaluations and progress-toward-tenure letters be taken into account during the tenure and promotion review.

Early cases (those forwarded before a candidate has five years in rank) are expected to demonstrate not only that the faculty member has clearly met or exceeded our standards in all three areas of teaching, research/creative activity, and service, but also that there is a substantial probability for a continued high rate of quality scholarship/creative activity, teaching, and service. Each department should have a clear mechanism, described in their bylaws, by which candidates can initiate early consideration and by which departments can determine whether to approve the candidate’s request. Approval for a non-mandatory review in any way commits the personnel committee, the department chair, or any other party to the review to making a positive recommendation. Nor does a decision to permit a non-mandatory review obligate candidates to go through with the review should they subsequently choose to wait until the completion of the full probationary period with a mandated sixth-year review. If the chair or department decides not to approve a candidate’s request for an early review, the matter is considered closed for that year.

Tenure Extension: The Nevada System of Higher Education Code defines the tenure-track probationary period as a period of time not to exceed seven years. Faculty normally go up for tenure at the beginning of the sixth year of employment. Under certain conditions, an extension to the probationary period may be granted by the provost. Faculty members whose employment begins in January should request a mid-year extension so that the tenure “clock” will begin on July 1. Faculty members may also request a tenure extension due to extenuating circumstances. The period of probation may exceed seven years upon written request of the faculty member and approval of the President or designee. The decision of whether to grant the faculty member’s request to exceed the seven-year probationary period shall be based on the sole discretion of the
President or designee. The decision of the President is final. The request for an extension of the seven-year period of probation must state the reasons for such extension. Notwithstanding provisions of the NSHE Code, Chapter Three, Section 3.3.4, tenure will not be automatically awarded by default upon completion of the revised probationary period.

Candidates’ responsibilities and timeline for promotion and tenure

- Please begin your process by reviewing the Provost’s Directions for Preparing and Submitting Applications for Promotion and Tenure: https://www.unr.edu/Documents/provost/provosts-office/forms/PT_Instructions-2017%20Revision.pdf

- The application form is available on the Office of the Provost website in Microsoft Word. There is an option in Digital Measures for creating a first rough draft of the application.

- February/March: The department/department chair will ask the candidate for a list of 5-6 potential external reviewers, including contact information and a brief description of their area of expertise. The candidate should bear in mind that half or more of the reviews will come from individuals not on the candidate’s list. The reason for this is to avoid selecting a set of reviewers that are strongly biased in favor of the candidate. Therefore, the candidate should think carefully about how many reviewers to put on the list, and who to include. For example, if the candidate lists the top 20 people in the field, the committee may have relatively few additional qualified reviewers to call upon.

The candidate may also submit names of potential reviewers that the candidate feels should not be used, with an explanation of why. Avoid reviewers that have or could reasonably be perceived to have a conflict of interest. For example, they should not be a current or former research collaborator, a former graduate mentor or thesis advisor, co-authors, or a former contemporary at another institution. Avoid reviewers who hold a position at an institution where the candidate has earned a degree, performed postdoctoral research, or had any other official appointment, regardless of whether the reviewer’s appointment at the institution overlapped with that of the candidate. Do not solicit letters from more than one individual at a single institution. Minimize the number of reviewers from non-U.S. universities. Researchers from non-U.S. universities often do not understand the U.S. tenure system and the importance of writing a detailed evaluation. Thus, any non-U.S. reviewers should be selected with care, with the recommendation being to limit the number to two or less.

Reviewers must be tenured faculty, preferably full professors, in programs at institutions with a research stature that is comparable or superior to that of the University of Nevada, Reno. At least half should come from institutions classified by the Carnegie Foundation as R1. Reviewers from institutions that are classified below R2 should be avoided unless the reviewer is a specialist in the candidate’s field whose qualifications can be clearly justified. For application for promotion to associate professor, one or two reviewers can be qualified associate professors, but the majority should be full professors.
- April/May: Candidate should prepare your research/artistry package, which will be sent to peer reviewers. This package should be completed no later than the first week in May and should include:
  - Current c.v.
  - Statement of research/artistry profile, major accomplishments, and future plans (2 pages maximum).
  - List of all publications, recordings, or other materials that external reviewers will consider. Compiling this list may require consultation with the chair and/or personnel committee as it may not be desirable to send every manuscript/CD, but certainly the most crucial. Send out sufficient materials for review that evaluators can do a thorough job. In the cases of books, send a published copy, if available; if the book has not yet been published, send the proofs or the latest version of the manuscript.
  - Copies of all publications or other materials to be reviewed. In general, do not send materials that are still in draft form or under review since these may still be revised. The exception to this rule is book manuscripts, which may be sent in manuscript form; in such cases, candidates should clearly indicate whether the book is accepted for publication, under review (at which press), or still seeking a publisher.

- Summer [exact date determined by department]: Candidate completes P&T application (a form found on the Provost’s website: https://www.unr.edu/provost/forms-and-policies) and compiles all research/creative activity, teaching and service materials, including teaching portfolio, etc. These should be organized in a binder with a Table of Contents and labeled tabs. Candidates should also provide supporting indicators of influence and quality, such as bibliometric information on journals, book series, university presses, artistic venues, etc. (e.g., what is their acceptance rate, review process, circulation), a list of citations of their work by other scholars or artists, reviews of their work, research or creative awards, external grants received, and other relevant indicators. See addendum to this document for an example of how these materials could be organized in the binder.

- Mid-August to first week of September: Department meets to determine the merits of the candidate’s case. Candidate should receive notification of the results of this meeting and of the chair’s recommendation on his/her case to the Dean.

- September-October: College Personnel Committee meets to discuss candidate’s case, including the results of the department-level review and the chair’s recommendation. The College Personnel Committee reports their decision on the case to the Dean. The Dean makes a recommendation in writing to the Provost and reports his/her decision to the department and candidate.

- November-December: University Promotion and Tenure Committee meets to discuss candidate’s case and provides a recommendation to the Provost. Candidates are typically informed of the Provost’s decision before the start of winter break.

- Mid-spring semester: Board of Regents’ meet and vote on tenure cases. Tenure and promotion to Associate Professor become effective on July 1.
Negative decisions

1. Candidates have rights to reconsideration under NSHE Code 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 and should be notified of these rights.
2. Reconsideration is possible at the point of the first negative decision.
3. Pay attention to the notification deadlines.
4. If the result of case for reconsideration request is negative, the following year will be the final year of employment at UNR.

**Addendum**

It is important to read carefully and follow closely the instructions for preparing and submitting the application for promotion and/or tenure (link above).

The department will review the application and all the supplemental materials provided in support of the application. Only the application will be forwarded to the College Personnel Committee and the Dean, though the supplemental materials may be requested by subsequent committees.

The application consists of the following items:

1. Application for Promotion and/or Tenure (proofread carefully)*
2. Department Chair Evaluation Form
3. Letter from Department Personnel Committee (if applicable)
4. Letter from Department Chair
5. Letter from College Personnel Committee
6. Letter from Dean
7. Chair’s Report of External Reviewers
8. External peer review letters
9. Table of Contents and/or summary overview of supplemental materials*
10. Progress toward tenure letters from the third-year review (from both chair and dean), fourth and fifth years (from chair)*
11. Annual evaluations for the probationary period (Part II only; portion completed by the chair)*

* To be submitted by the candidate

The binder of supplemental materials should be organized in an orderly way with a Table of Contents and section tabs that direct the reader to each component of the contents. The binder may be organized following the outline below. Items 3-8 constitute the teaching portfolio, which provides evidence of the scope and quality of teaching.

**Table of Contents and Corresponding Tab Numbers**

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Role Statements
3. Statement of Teaching Philosophy: This serves as the introduction to your Teaching Portfolio. It consists of a 1-2 page description of your essential teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices.
4. Summary of Courses Taught: Include here a list of the different courses you have taught with a brief description of your goals for the course, innovations you have incorporated if this is a course that you have taught several times. Was this a course you created or significantly re-designed? Describe what your approach is to this course and what you want students to take away from the course. (Some of this information may be included in the application itself.)
5. Sample Course Syllabi: Make certain that your course syllabi are complete, pedagogically sound, and include all the required statements. See guidelines for course syllabus creation at http://www.unr.edu/syllabus
6. Sample Course Exams and Materials: You don’t need to include every test or assignment you have created here, but do include a sampling that provides readers with a good sense of the type of materials you assign to your students and the kind of tests you use to assess learning outcomes.
7. Student Evaluations: You should include here your complete student evaluations of teaching for each course you have taught.
8. Peer Evaluations of Teaching/Awards: Include copies of all peer evaluations of your teaching that were completed during the probationary period. You may also include information on any department, college, university or NSHE teaching/advising awards you have received.
9. Statement of Research/Creative Activity Profile and Future Plans: This is the same statement you prepare to be sent out with your research/creative activity materials for the external reviewers.
10. Scholarly Publications or Creative Activity Materials: Obviously, you cannot include your book(s) in the binder (those will be submitted together with the binder), but do place copies of articles, chapters, book reviews, and other published materials here. If any of your publications or creative activities are collaborative work, be certain to include an explanation of your percentage of effort and the type of work contributed.
11. Service: Include here not only a list of your service commitments during the probationary period, but any materials that provide evidence of service performed (letters from committee chairs, and so on). It is important to fully describe the nature of the service. State the amount of time spent, the level of effort involved, and the duration of each service commitment. Do not rely on readers to know or guess what your service entailed.