

COLLEGE OF FORESTRY
DEPARTMENT OF WOOD SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Elements of the Faculty Peer Review Evaluation Letter

Background and Purpose:

The periodic review of faculty by their peers is prescribed by the OSU Faculty Handbook and College of Forestry Admin Memo 28. The WS&E guidelines for the conduct of faculty reviews specifies that one product of that review be a letter written by the Faculty Peer Review Committee that contains its evaluation and recommendations.

The purpose of this document is to identify key elements and characteristics that should be included in committee letters. The intent is to foster consistency in the scope and organization of the material contained in the many letters that will be produced by succeeding committees over time.

Focus on Goals and Intent

Different types of faculty peer review are identified in CoF Admin Memos 4 and 28. The evaluation letter must honor the intent of the different faculty reviews. These include:

Interim Reviews: The committee letter assesses progress toward promotion and/or tenure, referencing all elements of the faculty position, and is advisory in nature. It must identify and describe strengths and weaknesses, and explicitly note areas of performance that should be emphasized or strengthened prior to the next review, which will normally be for promotion or tenure. This is the opportunity for the committee to help a colleague understand departmental and University standards. This letter will normally be available to the next review committee to consider the candidate for promotion and/or tenure.

Promotion and/or Tenure Reviews: The letter is evaluative and must include a specific recommendation on promotion and/or indefinite tenure of the candidate. Normally, the result of a ballot of the committee is identified. The letter should speak to specific areas where a candidate's record meets or fails to meet the specific criteria found in the Faculty Handbook. The committee must show that it considered the comments of students and external reviewers, and should explain any disagreements.

Post-tenure Reviews: The letter must focus on strengths and weaknesses in faculty accomplishments during the review period, and must identify areas of excellent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance. The letter may provide guidance and counsel in the case of satisfactory or excellent performance, and must provide a recommendation for potential remedies where unsatisfactory performance in one or more job elements is identified. The tone of the letter should be of recognizing excellence and seeking to help faculty improve performance where needed. If a faculty member's performance is determined to be unsatisfactory in teaching, scholarship, or service, then the University Guidelines on Post-Tenure Review specify that additional actions based on the committee or unit leader evaluation shall be taken.

Common Elements of the Letter

In general, the following elements will be found in each review letter in the identified order. Committees may add additional information at their discretion.

The review letter is a CONFIDENTIAL communication under OSU policy.

1. A brief description of the candidate's position and the purpose of the review. It is not necessary, nor desirable, to use formal, legalistic language in this review. The key element must be clarity.
2. A brief summary of the committee's conclusions and recommendations.
3. A description of the nature of the materials used by the committee to reach its decisions or observations, a brief description of the process used by the committee or a reference to process guidelines, and an explanation of any involvement of others, especially students and clients. This information sets the stage for the committee's specific comments.
4. Specific evaluative comments on the candidate's record of performance **relevant to the guidelines for promotion and tenure**, and the position description. These should include:
 - 3.1 The areas of assignment (e.g. Resident Instruction, Continuing Education, Research, Extension). The committee must speak explicitly to how the candidate meets, fails to meet, or, with interim reviews, is progressing toward meeting, the criteria for promotion and tenure contained in the Faculty Handbook. Note that the criteria for tenure are separate from the criteria for promotion. With post-tenure evaluations, the emphasis is on continuing to meet the standards expected of tenured faculty at the appropriate rank.
 - 3.2 Scholarship, as defined in the OSU Faculty Handbook. Scholarship is required of all faculty, regardless of assignment or appointment. It may take many different forms, but must be peer evaluated and communicated beyond the University. Teaching is not a form of scholarship, but may lead to scholarship in many forms.
 - 3.3 Service to organization, profession and discipline is expected of all faculty and is described in the position description. The level of expectation will vary by rank, with the greatest efforts and impact expected of senior faculty. Extension faculty may have a role with service to the community.
5. Comments on other areas of performance, such as collegiality, character, professional integrity, and willingness to accept and cooperate in assignments.
6. Recommendations or Conclusions. These must be specific and in character with the nature of the review. They should address areas where the candidate's record should be improved as well as recognize outstanding performance.
7. Signatures. The written review will be signed by all or part of the committee, as they determine, or by the chair on behalf of the committee.