

Guidance for Candidates Applying for Tenure: The Self-Evaluation

Note: Please be aware that the following guidelines are meant to be helpful but do not supersede in any way the *Faculty Handbook*, which remains the ultimate authoritative source regarding promotion, tenure, and review.

I. Overall Considerations

The following are a few things to keep in mind as you write and revise your self-evaluation for tenure. When you are applying for tenure, it is likely that you have already put considerable effort into self-evaluations for earlier reviews. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; you can build on your earlier reviews. However, you do want to keep in mind that some audience members for your tenure self-evaluation will be new to the document, which is typically longer than the self-evaluation at midterm. Consequently, structuring a longer and more detailed document that is readable and compelling for different audiences requires fresh consideration. These suggestions are not intended to limit you, but they may be useful as you work on writing and revising the self-evaluation, which is the centerpiece of your tenure case.

Framing Your Case The self-evaluation is your opportunity to frame your accomplishments, tying them clearly to the evidence you have curated in the portfolios. At Lafayette we allow for a longer self-evaluation than is typical, motivated by the belief that it is important for tenure candidates to be able to present their file in the manner they choose. For this reason, you have the opportunity to make your own case regarding your philosophy, goals, and reflections on teaching, scholarship, and service. Consistent with that, there is no prescribed format for the self-evaluation. In general, given that you are being evaluated on teaching, scholarship, and service, it makes good sense to break the document into four sections: a brief Introduction, then Teaching, Scholarship, and Service.

The Big Picture Self-evaluations ought to be more than a slog through an annotated CV. They should give the reader a clear sense of context for what you have accomplished in the three main areas of endeavor. Self-reflection is an important aspect of the self-evaluation. Candidates should describe both strengths and challenges and how they addressed the latter. PTR welcomes candidates' reflection on their own risk-taking and innovation, including cases where such experiments may not have yielded their intended results. Similarly, PTR welcomes an assessment of the obstacles encountered alongside the accomplishments in the scholarly area. In general, the self-evaluation should give the reader not only a sense of what you have accomplished, but how you have responded to feedback and the occasional obstacles and setbacks that inevitably occur.

Audiences There are two main audiences for your self-evaluation: a specialized one and a non-specialist one. Your department or program, PTR, and the President will be holding your record up against the criteria described in the *Faculty Handbook* and in your program or department's specific Scholarship Guidelines. While members of your department/program may know your scholarship area well, members of your PTR case committee will be from outside of your department or program, and they will bring different disciplinary backgrounds to their reviews of your teaching and research. In other words, your self-evaluation should be intelligible to both more specialized and non-

specialist audiences. In addition to needing to address these two audiences, you should attempt to make clear the relevant connections between your work and the evaluation criteria. It may feel awkward to sing your own praises, but you do need to show how the work you have done fits Lafayette's standards for distinction in teaching, scholarship, and service. Let the audiences know *why* what you have done is important. A listing is not sufficient; the self-evaluation should present an argument for how your accomplishments satisfy the College's criteria.

If In Doubt, Ask When crafting the Teaching, Scholarship, and Service sections of the self-evaluation, you will likely find that there are some activities that you could put in multiple areas. If you are uncertain where something fits, ask for advice from senior colleagues. You should be confident that such activities will be considered in their complexity, across the various criteria, by readers of your file. You will undoubtedly have questions that are not covered by this document or by the *Faculty Handbook*. If in doubt, ask! The Executive Assistant to the Provost is a good person to seek out for recommendations on faculty mentors outside of your department or division who can help with particular questions or review your narrative with a fresh set of eyes.

Overall, the sections addressing teaching, scholarship, and service involve different criteria, so the advice for structuring each section differs.

II. Teaching

As with the self-evaluation as a whole, keep in mind that there are two different audiences for this section. These audiences bring different levels of experience and knowledge about teaching issues particular to your discipline/s or department/program. In particular, you will need to introduce and frame these issues for PTR and the President, since they will be less familiar with them. Senior colleagues, either within or outside of your department with recent experience reviewing faculty performance (for example, a former PTR member or department head/program chair), may be approached for advice.

As with the overall document, you should consider beginning your section on teaching by situating what you do in and out of the classroom, and why, within a larger context. Successful self-evaluations of teaching are a thoughtful reflection on your teaching process, how it has evolved, and where you are excited to innovate in the future. You might describe the aspects of teaching that motivate you, or your approach to student learning, or key features of your teaching style, assignments, and feedback routines. Readers will seek to connect your overall approach to teaching to evidence you present in your teaching portfolio. Your discussion of teaching may also include some pointers to specific items in your teaching portfolio that give evidence linked to the characteristics for distinction in teaching and the other values listed in Section 4.2.1. For reference, those are copied here (*Faculty Handbook 2021-22*):

4.2.1 Teaching

Teaching is the most important criterion for tenure and promotion. Lafayette College requires distinction in teaching, not simply competence. The College defines distinctive teaching as *organized, engaging, intellectually challenging, reflective, inclusive, and effective instruction that achieves well-conceived*

learning goals and facilitates student learning. Distinctive teaching should be evident in a faculty member's overall instructional record at Lafayette College.

For reviews, candidates need to provide a holistic narrative that uses the characteristics of distinctive teaching listed below to describe how they meet the College's standard. Candidates' self-evaluations and teaching portfolios should include concrete examples of distinctive teaching. Candidates whose programmatic requirements, disciplinary formations, and/or pedagogical approaches diverge somewhat from the characteristics below are encouraged to address in their self-evaluation the different ways in which their record does speak to the definition of distinctive teaching.

A candidate being reviewed for tenure and/or promotion may elect to have their teaching evaluated under any set of criteria that was in effect during their probationary period.

- A. Planning and delivering well-organized courses that demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the field of study;
- B. Conducting individual classroom, laboratory, or studio sessions thoughtfully and effectively;
- C. Fostering an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to differences among students;
- D. Engaging and challenging students in their learning;
- E. Mentoring students in individualized instruction, such as honors theses, independent studies, and/or research projects, so as to successfully advance the students' research skills and/or disciplinary expertise;
- F. Reviewing, providing constructive feedback, and assessing student work based on clear and high standards and in a timely manner;
- G. Being regularly available and providing effective guidance to advisees, students enrolled in classes and those seeking advice.

Reviews of teaching incorporate a broad range of materials into the review process, which allows candidates and review committees to consult multiple sources of information in considering a candidate's teaching record as a whole.

There are many different ways to structure this section, and the choice is up to you. Some people structure it according to key aspects of their teaching philosophy; others structure it course by course; and others structure it according to the characteristics of distinction in teaching listed in the *Faculty Handbook*. Student evaluations are not the only (or even the main) source of evidence in which PTR is interested; you can and

should use other sources of evidence regarding your teaching, including course materials, student work, peer observations, and friendly letters.

While the structure and framing are up to you, since PTR is evaluating you based on section 4.2.1, the alignment of your teaching with characteristics A-G should be clear. Using specific wording from those characteristics can provide guideposts for your readers. Some areas of your informal teaching (not in-load), such as mentoring students, and formal and informal academic advising, are explicitly recognized in characteristics E and G. Many faculty members spend substantial time mentoring students; PTR and other evaluators value this less visible work and would like to know how you address such advising, where relevant.

III. Scholarship

Just as with your Teaching section, you should think about writing for both audiences when crafting your scholarship section, which means giving those who are not widely-read in your field a larger context in which to consider your work. What motivates your research? What are the larger questions in your field or fields, and how are the questions you ask situated in this larger context? Part of this description needs to be pitched at a level that PTR members will understand, and part of it needs to be written for your departmental/programmatic colleagues. Your departmental/programmatic colleagues will not be offended if some of your description is basic or elementary as they understand it is geared toward PTR. Similarly, PTR members will not worry if they cannot grasp the details in some sections written expressly for colleagues in your field. You may choose to organize the scholarship section in a variety of ways, whether chronologically, according to different research areas, or through common themes that emerge throughout your scholarship.

Your department or program's current scholarship guidelines can be found on the Provost's webpage. The general criteria for scholarship can be found in section 4.2.2 and are copied here (*Faculty Handbook 2021-22*).

4.2.2 Scholarship

Scholarship is the second most important criterion in the promotion and tenure review. Candidates are expected to demonstrate scholarly development, accomplishment, and promise.

A successful scholar

1. is actively engaged in the advancement of knowledge and/or artistic creation;
2. has produced high-quality, original works of scholarship in the form of publications, exhibitions, and/or performances; and
3. participates actively in scholarly discourse with professional peers, such as through involvement in conferences, presentation of invited lectures, or published reviews of other scholars' work.

Since your readers will be looking for signs of development and promise, give a clear description of your scholarly evolution. Just as your Teaching section demonstrates how your pedagogical work fits the characteristics for distinction in teaching, you will want to make clear to your department/program committee and PTR exactly how your accomplishments in your scholarly work fit the categorizations within your Scholarship Guidelines. Be sure to indicate which version of the Scholarship Guidelines are being used if those guidelines have changed while you were pre-tenure.

If you are involved in collaborative or multi-authored work, you need to comment on your role in the project so that the nature of your contribution is clear.

Please make sure there is alignment between the scholarship listed in your CV and that discussed in your self-evaluation. For example, if you say you have published x papers during your probationary period, it is helpful if those x papers are highlighted in some manner in your CV. Be sure to distinguish, according to the conventions of your discipline, the stage of publication and type of publication. Regarding stage of publication, for example, you should indicate whether the scholarship you list is published, accepted for publication and forthcoming, submitted for consideration, or work in progress. Be clear about dates of publications so that works completed prior to the probationary period can be readily distinguished from those completed during the probationary period. Regarding type of publication, also depending on your discipline, you might list your scholarship as being a peer-reviewed book or article, a review article, a poster presentation, an exhibition, a conference presentation, a book review, or a blog post. Given that your department or program's scholarship guidelines may highlight the importance of involving students in research, your CV may indicate student co-authors clearly. Aim for clarity, completeness, and consistency regarding the publications you list.

In your self-evaluation, you may draw on the external letters as evidence, or respond to particular claims in them, but this is not necessary.

IV. Service

In this section you should be succinct and clear. You may want to mention general areas where you plan to make future contributions, or to show how your service aligns with other strengths in your teaching and scholarship file, although neither is required. The expectations for service are described in section 4.2.3 (*Faculty Handbook 2021-22*).

4.2.3 Service

The third criterion for tenure and promotion is service, which is given less weight than teaching and scholarship. Candidates are expected to demonstrate active engagement with the (1) department/program, (2) College beyond the department/program, and/or (3) professional community beyond the College.

“Friendly letters” (letters of support, *Faculty Handbook 4.3.4.7*) may testify to your service accomplishments, and you are welcome to quote these as evidence. Most service tasks speak for themselves inasmuch as all members of the DRC/PRC and PTR share a common understanding of what it means to serve on an elected committee or a search committee, to bring in a speaker, or to advise a student group. Attending required

events like department or faculty meetings or optional campus events is not the sort of community participation that counts as service work. Focus on elaborating on any elements of service that are notable, such as titled positions (director, etc.), specific contributions that you made as a member of committees, or any important contributions you made outside of formal structures. If your service activities do require a bit of explanation, a good place to put that is in your annotated service list. The narrative for your service should address notable contributions, but need not duplicate every activity itemized in your service list.

V. Looking Ahead

It may make sense to conclude by returning to the big picture you sketched at the outset. Where are you in your envisioned trajectory? Where do you want to be in the future? Make clear how you would like your ongoing career at the College to unfold. That is what the College is deciding on ultimately: the long-lasting impact (on students, programs, departments, scholarly communities) that a candidate is likely to have, in building from accomplishments so far. What are you excited about for the future? Where do you hope to contribute more? Stocktaking and big-picture thinking are encouraged.