Faculty Personnel Committee for Tenure and Promotion
Guidelines and Best Practices

Revised April 2022

These Guidelines and Best Practices are meant to ensure a high level of continuity and uniformity in the deliberations and actions of the Faculty Personnel Committee. These guidelines interpret and complement the Faculty Handbook, but do not supersede it; the Faculty Handbook remains the sole authoritative source of information regarding promotion and tenure. Based on these guidelines future committees will:

- follow the same procedures in faculty reviews.
- interpret the pertinent sections of the Faculty Handbook in a consistent way.
- be aware of various important issues not discussed in the Faculty Handbook

These guidelines constitute a "living document," posted in the category of Advices and Queries. We envision this document to be fine-tuned by subsequent personnel committees, in consultation with Faculty Council, and edited when necessary to reflect any changes to our faculty handbook that would affect the review process or the responsibilities of the Personnel Committee.

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Role of the Provost

The role of the Provost in collaboration with the committee chair is to ensure that the review process and deliberations are timely, fair, and conform to the faculty handbook. The Provost also maintains an up-to-date schedule of reviews and notifies candidates when they are eligible.

Specific tasks are:

- In the fall semester prior to the academic year of review, remind each reviewee's department chair (and mentor, if applicable), in written form, that the faculty member will be reviewed next year and ask them to fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in Advices and Queries. Review and revise in future
- During the spring semester prior to the academic year of review, notify faculty members that they will soon be reviewed for tenure or promotion. In the case of promotion to full professor and, in certain circumstances (as outlined in the handbook) to the rank of associate, the individual may decide whether or not he or she would like to be considered in the relevant academic year.
- At the beginning of the fall semester, distribute the list of reviewees and reviewers to all faculty members via email, with a link to the form for faculty comments (peer evaluation form). with a deadline for submitting comments for those to be reviewed during that semester. In the spring semester, send out the list of remaining reviewees and reviewers via email and a follow-up email to all faculty.
- Ensure that each year's personnel committee is thoroughly oriented to their task, using "Guidelines and Best Practices".
- Arrange for the college counsel to brief the committee at the beginning of the academic year about relevant legal considerations, including (but not limited to) legal liability, confidentiality, and proper disposal of sensitive documents. This can be done as part of the orientation of committee members described below.
- Carefully consider with the committee any circumstances that may require recusal or represent a conflict of interest as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.
- Maintain up-to-date copies of all letters of hire, appointment, summary statements from previous reviews, and other agreements in each faculty member's personnel file.
- Maintain currency in the relevant academic literature related to the process of tenure and promotion especially as it relates to gender, race, ethnicity, age, and discipline.
- Understand the AAUP guidelines regarding tenure and promotion.
- When the committee recommends a negative decision or deferral, the provost shall contact the candidate and communicate the committee's recommendation.

- When the candidate has been informed of the committee's decision (whether positive or negative), the provost will then send the candidate a copy of the committee's summary statement.
- The provost will then meet with each candidate to discuss the outcome and the contents of the summary statement.

The Provost is an ex-officio member of the faculty personnel committee with voice, but without vote. During meetings of the Personnel Committee the Provost often serves as a valuable source of information, providing advice, historical background, and context. The Personnel Committee's decisions are passed on to the Provost in the form of recommendations.

<u>**As of November 2021, the question of destroying or archiving committee documents for administrative access remains under discussion. Current practice is to move the candidate's review folder from the FPC drive to the Academic Dean drive at the conclusion of the review. Historic practice retained only the longer report/summary statement but destroyed all other documents. **</u>

Note from Provost Kim Denu September 15, 2023
Here is a summary of noted Office of the Provost practices from Jaron Burdick, Office Assistant to the Provost

1. **Faculty personnel files** are kept in hard copy in the provost's office in a locked and fire-proof file cabinet. They are subject to faculty handbook heading 2.2.5 and are "maintained in compliance with pertinent federal and state laws." (2.2.5.3) The question of who has access to faculty personnel files and whether or not that access is in any way restricted would be dictated entirely by relevant state and federal law and not to any known internal policy. I would recommend a conversation with Greta Bruneel to determine what preexisting rights or limitations the president, board of trustees, or other members of the administration may have when it comes to personnel files.

2. **Faculty review files** are the documents collected and created during the faculty review process. The provost's office has access to these documents digitally on the Faculty Personnel drive on Egnyte, and archives them on the Academic Dean drive at the conclusion of the academic year. Because they are the source material for the committee's actions, faculty review files are treated with a high degree of confidentiality (see handbook 2.2.1.4b). The only document from a faculty review file to find its way into a reviewee's personnel file is the summary statement created by the reviewer at the conclusion of the faculty review.
   The digital archives of faculty review materials maintained by our office on the Academic Dean drive go back to 2008, but the practice of saving the majority of review materials for each review candidate appears to have started in 2016-17. Whether the retention of these materials constitutes a breach of HR law in California may be another good question for Greta.

Role of the Committee Chair

The committee chair and vice-chair are elected by the members of the Personnel Committee. Chair and vice-chair must hold the rank of full professor. The responsibilities of the chair include the following items:

- Preparation of the review schedule and the assignment of reviewers, in consultation with the Provost and all members of the personnel committee.
- Planning of an orientation session, together with the Provost and the college's legal counsel (more information on this below).
- Checking that up-to-date versions of forms and templates are posted in the appropriate places on the FPC shared drive, with the appropriate permissions.
- Ensure that first-year faculty are informed about the tenure and review process.
- Preparation and timely distribution of personnel committee meeting agendas.
- Leads committee meetings according to established parliamentary rules as needed. It has been our custom to carefully consider each member's opinion and to take the time needed to achieve consensus, though this may not always be possible.
- The chair is available for consultation as questions arise in the preparation of a review.
- In the case of a positive review, the chair will contact reviewees in person or by telephone on the day the review is concluded to communicate the committee's recommendation (the conclusion is reached when the summary statement is finalized). If the chair was the primary reviewer, the vice-chair shall contact the reviewee.
- After the candidate has been informed of the result of their review, whether positive or negative, the chair will send the candidate a PDF of the committee's letter. The provost's executive assistant should be cc'd on this email, at which point he or she shall a. Arrange a meeting between the provost and the candidate; b. Add the committee's letter to the faculty member's file.
- Organizing a meeting at the end of the academic year for the next year's committee (and, if necessary, outgoing members of the committee). At this meeting, next year's committee will elect the chair, vice-chair, and secretary. They will also look at the list of reviews for the year, and determine which shall be conducted in the Fall and which in the Spring. After the meeting, the new committee chair shall contact these faculty and inform them of the semester of their review. Note: reviewers do not need to be assigned to specific faculty at this stage.

Instructions for the Committee Secretary

The minutes of personnel committee meetings are brief, listing only the members present and absent, who was reviewed for what, but no comments are included on the substance of the committee deliberations. Minutes concerning other committee business (other than a faculty review), however, should be included and need not be overly brief. The minutes conclude by recording the personnel committee's final recommendation for the review. The minutes are stored on the FPC shared drive.

Orientation of Committee Members

The committee orientation is intended to improve consistency across all reviews. In preparation for your work on the personnel committee it is important that the members:

- Review copies of the pertinent sections of the current faculty handbook.
- Read and discuss the Guidelines and Best Practices documents
- Receive sample memos for use in faculty reviews, plus a timeline and checklist, and a sample summary statement. In recent years, this has been done via the FPC's shared drive.
- Review the basic description of and charge to the Faculty Personnel Committee in the Faculty Handbook. Read and discuss sections 1.4.3.6.1 and 2.1.3.1.
- Review the criteria for tenure and promotion, and the corresponding procedures, as delineated in the faculty handbook. Read and discuss sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2, and 2.2.3.
- Consider the recusal and conflict of interest policies described in the handbook. For this purpose, read and discuss sections 1.4.3.7 and 2.1.3.5.
- Learn about confidentiality requirements. Learn about what records to keep (for how long) and about what records to destroy (electronic and printed). Learn about issues involving e-mail and voice mail. Learn about the need to destroy personally held copies of sensitive documents at the conclusion of a review.
- Learn about what types of questions to ask the reviewee (and all the other sources of information), and what types of questions to avoid.
- Review some of the important literature related to promotion and tenure. These can be found on the FPC shared drive.

Gathering Review Materials

Once you, the reviewer, have been assigned a faculty candidate, send the Initial Letter to the candidate and set a date for a first meeting.

Read the candidate's personnel file in the Provost's office. The contents of the file may not be removed from the office and may not be photocopied or photographed, but handwritten notes may be taken.

Note that over the years, a number of documents have been produced by the Provost together with certain departments, to deal with special situations (e.g. the teacher-coach model in kinesiology and athletics, a job-sharing arrangement in mathematics, a teacher-therapist position in psychology, teacher/gallery director in the art department). If the reviewer believes that the reviewee falls into one of these categories, they should ask the provost and the department if there are any such documents. These documents should state the date on which they became effective, and the persons involved in their negotiation. And, of course, copies of these documents should be made available to the personnel committee (chair and reviewer), the department chair, and the faculty involved.

At the first meeting with the candidate, clarify your role as reviewer. You are primarily a gatherer of information, being as objective as possible; the committee is the interpreter of that information. You can make no guarantees about outcome, since it is the committee as a whole, not you as an individual, that will make a recommendation about the candidate. Also, it is not your role to help the candidate to edit his or her materials, particularly the self-assessment and faith-learning essays. Reiterate handbook policy that the burden of proof lies with the faculty member under review (2.2.1.4). It is your job, as the reviewer, to fully and faithfully put on display for the committee all of the input you receive about the candidate's performance. While you hope to be helpful to the candidate, you are not the candidate's mentor or advocate.

In this meeting, outline the process and timeline and ask any questions that arise from your initial reading of the candidate's materials. Be sure to specifically address the fundamental criterion as identified by the Handbook in 2.2.1.1. Set a date for a second meeting with the candidate; this will come after you have received and reviewed most of the input for the review but before the committee meets to deliberate. Explain that you may be checking back with the candidate from time to time for additional information.

All of the candidate's department colleagues should provide written input and be interviewed individually. Interviews should be conducted in person, whenever possible. Department chairs in particular should provide a thorough assessment; it is appropriate to ask the chair or chairs how they have fulfilled their responsibilities for mentoring and orienting the candidate, including the clear communication of any department-specific tenure and promotion requirements. Contact all references named by the candidate, and acknowledge their responses with thanks. The Vice President of Student Life, and the Registrar should also be contacted for every review. Faculty mentors are not obligated to provide input, but may do so if they so desire. It is very important that at least six students be individually interviewed in person. Half of the students interviewed should be named by the candidate. In your selection of these students, aim for diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, class rank, and major. Assure all references that their input will be held in confidence and that they will not be identified by name in the review report.

The sources of evidence for faculty reviews are described in sections 2.2.1.3 and 2.2.1.4 of the Faculty Handbook. You may receive and solicit input from faculty, administrators, and students. Former faculty, administrators, or students may provide input if their time at Westmont has overlapped the period for which the candidate is under review. External references are only appropriate if named by the candidate, and these would normally be restricted to professional colleagues from the candidate's discipline. In the case of promotion to full professor, such external references are required. If provided by the candidate, a character reference from a pastor or community member will be accepted.

The second meeting with the candidate, which should occur after all written and verbal feedback has been collected, is an opportunity to ask any additional questions that may have arisen in the review. Reviewers should ensure that any concerns they raise are relevant to the Handbook criteria. Resist the temptation to be overly encouraging or reassuring; stick to the facts and avoid sweeping expressions.

Allow the candidate to respond to these concerns in this meeting, and allow the candidate several days to provide further written or oral response and any other material relevant for addressing the concerns in question if he or she so desires. (If the candidate chooses to offer a response, that response must be included with the other materials the candidate supplies for the review.) Keep careful notes of what is discussed in this meeting.

Preparing the Confidential Information for Committee Deliberations

To ensure confidentiality, department secretaries may not be used in the work of compiling the report. Student workers may not be used. If help is needed, the administrative assistants in the Provost's office may be available.

Before the committee meets to deliberate, the reviewer will compile a 2-3 page overview with talking points based on all the gathered materials. They should also make sure to upload the following items to the shared drive:

1. The candidate's personal statements.
2. The candidate's CV.
3. Copies of all letters of reference from colleagues, inside and outside the institution.
4. Detailed notes from faculty interviews.
5. Copies of the IDEA summary sheets.
6. Summaries of classroom visits.
7. Summaries of student responses to the personnel committee evaluation form.
8. Detailed notes from student interviews.
9. All written student evaluations.
10. Copies of the advisor evaluations.

Based on committee deliberations, the reviewer will then draft a 2-3 page summary statement that will be edited and finalized by the entire committee. In both positive and negative reviews, this summary statement will be given to the candidate and placed in the candidate's file. The summary statement is the "report of the Personnel Committee's findings" (2.2.2.3 and 2.2.3.3.d).

Committee Process

The primary reviewer will upload to the FPC shared drive the required documents for committee deliberations at least three working days before they meet to deliberate.

It is highly desirable that all committee members be present for each review; when the Personnel Committee is constituted for a normal semester's workload, no more than one member may be absent for there to be a quorum. The chair or vice-chair of the committee and the Provost are present for all reviews. All committee members should be encouraged to express their thoughts and concerns. Absent members may send questions and comments via email to the chair prior to the discussion.

In the committee deliberations, the reviewer acts as a guide and resource as various sections of the report come under consideration. The reviewer will remind the committee of relevant aspects of the candidate's performance which may be overlooked in discussion, whether those aspects be positive or negative. In short, the reviewer's role is to ensure that adequate consideration is given to all parts of the review. If, as may occasionally happen, the committee desires further information, the conversation about the review will be paused, and the reviewer will revert to the role of information gatherer. This information gathering should, unless deemed inappropriate by the committee, include further conversation with the candidate. The reviewer will bring the desired information to the next meeting.

Fundamental Criteria Considerations

All reviews involve careful consideration of a candidate's commitment to and embodiment of Westmont's fundamental criterion. Occasionally, a major portion of deliberation may be devoted to the fundamental criterion. This may occur when the materials gathered for review point to a possible lack of fidelity to the college's core, missional commitments as articulated in our Articles of Faith, our Community Life Statement, and in our pledge as faculty to diligently seek a holistic, integrated expression of faith, teaching, and scholarly learning (2.2.1.1.1). It may also occur when the materials gathered for review point to deficiencies of character or behavioral patterns that undermine colleagues or exacerbate conflict (2.2.1.1.2). Because these two areas constitute a non-negotiable standard, if either emerges as a concern, FPC faces a particularly consequential discussion.

Our faculty handbook provides additional perspectives for such challenging deliberations. Collegiality is further defined in the section on "Professional Ethics and Relationships" (2.4.1.2) and in the section on the appropriate handling of grievances (2.10). When a candidate's research or teaching is the source of concern, in addition to our core documents, FPC should consult the "Academic Freedom" guidelines outlined in the handbook (2.4.1.1) and review the commentary on the Articles of Faith (2.1.2.3.3 c). Since alleged deficiencies in either of these areas represent a "violation of contract," FPC will also find wisdom in that handbook section (2.2.4.2).

We acknowledge the tension in the handbook between a personnel review, where the burden of proof is on the candidate and where colleagues' comments remain anonymous, and the processes for a formal "violation of contract" grievance, where the burden of proof is on those bringing the allegation, who do not remain anonymous. This tension, in deliberations of such consequence, ought to hold FPC and all involved in the review to the highest standards of evidence and evaluation.

Summary Statement

In all reviews, committee members will offer suggestions to the reviewer for the drafting of a summary statement.

The handbook's guidance on summary statements is as follows: "Summary statements will include two sections:
1) Formal Recommendation. An opening paragraph indicating the Personnel Committee's recommendation.
2) Summary. Several paragraphs summarizing the overall findings of the review, organized according to each of the four criteria for review. This section should include affirmations as well as suggestions for improvement or further development. In the case of an intermediate tenure review, the statement will include a third section:
3) Expectations. In this section the Personnel Committee will explicitly state the matters that must be satisfactorily addressed before the candidate's tenure review." (2.2.1.4.c)

A draft of this statement is then brought to a subsequent meeting for editing by the entire committee. The statement should proceed in an organized manner through each of the main categories of review, offering meaningful affirmation and carefully crafted stipulations identifying what the candidate should do to progress toward tenure and/or promotion. For the negative issues that are raised, ensure that the summary statement states explicitly what matters of candidate performance need to be satisfactorily addressed (as per 2.2.1.4.c.3). If negative issues from an earlier review have been satisfactorily resolved in the most recent review, they need not be mentioned in the summary statement of the current review. The summary statement must of course include the Personnel Committee's decision and recommendation.

In all reviews, the candidate will receive a copy of the summary statement from the Provost 2.2.2.3 and 2.2.3.3.d). A copy of the summary statement will be placed in the candidate's personnel file. Copies of the confidential information for committee deliberations should be shredded.

Reliability and Validity of Method and Data

Whether or not the committee's recommendation is positive or negative, the integrity of the decision rests largely upon the quality of the information that was used to make it. Likewise, the integrity of the process partially relies upon the quality of the means used to gather the data. It is the reviewer's responsibility to maximize the reliability and validity of the information presented to the committee for its deliberation.

Reliability refers to the degree to which a particular method of gathering information—whether from questionnaires, interviews, or a standardized evaluation instrument--produces consistent results. For example, if the questions used to interview a student produce the same responses from that student regardless of who asks them, then we can say that the questions are reliable.

Validity is more critical; validity refers to the degree to which a method produces results that measures what it purports to measure. For example, student ratings of an instructor's mastery of an academic field may be consistent (i.e., reliable), but may reflect something other than mastery (and thus have low validity). The method can be reliable but the resulting data can lack validity which represents the trustworthiness and accuracy of the methods, data, or findings. One of the critiques of the use of standardized student teaching evaluations is that they are not built upon a coherent theory of teaching effectiveness, rendering unclear what they, indeed, actually measure.

High validity and reliability also contribute to the reduction of bias. Bias refers to the degree to which a method of gathering information produces results that systematically leans in one direction. For example, interviews with only high-scoring students may produce results that are biased toward higher ratings of an instructor's teaching ability. While complete removal of bias is unachievable, we can take measures to minimize it to the best of our abilities.

Regarding Interviews of Students and Faculty Colleagues:
The following techniques and principles tend to maximize the reliability and the validity of information gathered by interviewing:

- Schedule interviews in a timely manner, keeping in mind that the complexity of both student and faculty schedules will require considerable flexibility on the reviewer's part in scheduling the required meetings. For the students chosen at random from the reviewee's current class schedules, it is advisable to request feedback from more students than necessary, to account for inevitable non-responses.
- Assure the individuals to be interviewed that their comments will be held in confidence by you and the committee.
- Try not to schedule more than two interviews back to back so that the information does not blur in your mind. Type up your notes as soon after the meeting as possible. ● Use the same wording to ask the same questions from interview to interview. Using the questions provided on the on-line forms for students and faculty to guide the interview process helps maintain consistency from interview to interview, increasing reliability and validity. The wording of questions asking for non-threatening information tends not to influence the response. However, the wording of those intended to elicit sensitive or potentially threatening information.

  When asking follow-up questions:
  - Avoid double-barreled phrasing such as "What did you like and dislike about the class?" or "Is the professor organized and clear?"
  - Avoid leading questions such as "I hear that Professor X is wonderful in the classroom" or "Some students have said that Professor Y is boring" or "Other students or faculty members have said...." Leading questions introduce bias. Ask the student or colleague to speak about their experience.
  - Ask open ended questions rather than those requiring only a "yes" or "no" answer: "How does the professor keep your attention?" rather than, "Does the professor keep your attention?"
  - Elicit the reasons and--if relevant, the evidence-- behind the comments--positive, negative, or neutral--in a non-threatening or leading manner: "Tell me more about

that" or "What has led you to draw that conclusion?" or "what have you observed the candidate say or do that led you to draw that conclusion?" Even if a student or colleague states that the individual is "wonderful" ask them to tell you what that means to him or her.
- Address more sensitive topics later rather than early in the interview.
- Pause a few seconds (count to ten slowly) to give the person an opportunity to formulate a response to your question.

If criticisms arise in these interviews which the reviewee has not addressed directly either in the self-assessment or in your prior conversations with him or her, be sure to factually state them at your next meeting, without revealing their source and ask them to provide clarification or more information. Give the reviewee at least 48 hours to submit a response or to talk with you further. Whether speaking with the individual under review, students, colleagues, or administrators, it is important to stick to the facts; don't make evaluative comments even, "I think you will be fine" or "I don't anticipate any problems."

Regarding The Use of Student Teaching Evaluations

The reviewer and the committee should treat the student evaluations as a point from which to ask questions rather than as a basis to make a judgment. The academic literature, thus far, does not provide a consistent voice about the validity or reliability of student teaching evaluations. However, a critical mass of research reports a host of factors which influence student evaluations, several of which are outside of the instructor's control or are unrelated to effective teaching. As a result, extremely high scores may be as much of a concern as extremely low ones. Here are several questions to pursue, if needed, while reading the student teaching evaluations:

- Examine the standard deviation of the scores. The larger the standard deviation the less agreement among the students about the particular item; the smaller indicates that more students agreed or disagreed similarly.
- Pay attention to the relative frequency with which comments are made and general trends that emerge.
- Consider the complexities of student perceptions of the professor--ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, accent etc.
- Consider the nature of the class, whether, for example, it is a general education class or an upper-division class for majors.

Forms for Use in Faculty Reviews

- Review Timeline and Checklist
- Sample Initial Letter to the Reviewee
- Sample Letter to Faculty Colleagues
- Peer/Colleague Evaluation Form
- Sample email to Students
- Student Evaluation Form (written or online)
- Sample Letter to External Reviewers

Important Literature Related to Tenure and Promotion

Upon election to the personnel committee, members should familiarize themselves with the relevant academic literature (or summaries thereof) regarding the review and promotion of faculty members. We recommend the following:

- Good Practice in Tenure Evaluations: Advice for Tenured Faculty, Department Chairs and Academic Administrators (Joint project of the American Council on Education, The American Association of University Professors and United Educators Insurance).
- The Probationary Period: Evaluation and Decision, AAUP Website. ● The AAUP Policy Documents and Reports (The Red Book).

For the evaluation of faculty colleagues' work in the category of professional development – in diverse areas such as physics, theater arts, or athletics – it may be helpful to obtain guidelines from various professional associations.