

Best Practices for Documenting

Teaching, Research and Service

A full description of the criteria for teaching, research/creative/scholarly, and service activity can be found in the [University Policies and Procedure: The Faculty Blue Book](#), 2020.

Best Practices in Teaching

Faculty are reminded that a file should reflect and refer to unit criteria, where applicable. A teaching portfolio, prepared by the candidate and updated from year to year, is the best way to document teaching accomplishments in the descriptive part of this section. Discussion of student evaluations should include information about the choice of student evaluation forms for particular classes, the context in which the individual's ratings should be viewed (e.g. student evaluation rating of other sections of the course(s)), and information on trends, if any, in the candidate's own ratings. Be sure to explicitly address any concerns that were raised in previous annual or comprehensive reviews. When discussing student evaluations, remember that those reading the file will include individuals outside of the candidate's department and discipline area, so it is helpful to describe the courses taught (e.g. large lecture course, small seminar, part of an especially demanding sequence in the major, lab, studio, etc.) rather than simply referring to them by course number.

Candidates for promotion to professor may have collected student evaluations over many years, so a discussion of student evaluations in terms of changing curricula and course assignments may be helpful.

In addition to numerical ratings, it is helpful to provide verbatim examples of students' written comments in the evaluative sections, selected to show the range of student opinion. All faculty receive both positive and negative comments so provide a context to help readers interpret them. For example:

“of 47 student comments on this course over three semesters, 33 were generally positive and 9 were negative; the remainder were neutral. Positive comments included: [example]. Negative comments included: [examples]. Negative comments mainly concerned large amounts of required reading, which we do not consider inappropriate in an upper-level literature course.”

The assessment of teaching is not limited to student ratings. UAF requires two of three types of teaching evaluation: student evaluation ratings, peer observations, and course syllabi. Other evidence of teaching quality is also helpful to reviewers. Discussion of syllabi and class assignments, assessment of pedagogical innovations, and descriptions of contributions to curriculum development may all be included. In addition to classroom teaching, it is important to include a description and evaluation of activities such as advising, thesis and dissertation supervision, and work with students in research, studio, clinical, or internship settings.

Since reviewers expect candidates to present themselves in the best light, the presentation of uniformly positive student comments raises obvious questions in their minds. Therefore, if only

a sample of student comments is included, it is important to explain how it was selected and why it is representative.

Best Practices in Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity

The narrative portion of the file should provide reviewers with a summative statement of the candidate's program of research or creative activity. Strong narratives typically demonstrate the coherent themes in the candidate's work and effectively explain and contextualize accomplishments and contributions. If the candidate's profile might be considered atypical, it is especially important to provide a context for understanding the contributions. The narrative should be written in terms that are understandable to a general academic audience, not just to specialists in the field. The readers of the file will not all be from the candidate's own research specialty, or even from the same discipline. Unnecessary jargon should be avoided and necessary technical terminology explained clearly. The evaluative part of this section should include an explanation of practices and conventions of publishing or exhibiting in the discipline that may not be clear to outsiders. For example, multi-authored papers and collaborative research projects are common in the sciences but relatively rare in the humanities. Single-authored books may be more common in the humanities and some social sciences. Information on the following points is very helpful:

- The prestige and selectivity of the venues in which the candidate has published, performed, or exhibited. (In the case of journal publications, editors may be able to provide information on the percentage of submissions accepted for publication.)
- Explanation of standard methods of review in the field. For example, newspaper (or other) articles about a work or person in the sciences are not considered to be relevant evaluations, but they may be valid indicators of artistic reputation of a work or product for those in the arts.
- The availability of external research grants in the candidate's specialty and the competitiveness of the agencies from which funding has been received. Lack of external funding in the arts and humanities is the rule rather than the exception and usually does not require special comment. The reverse is true in the natural sciences and in some of the social sciences.
- Whether contributions to edited volumes, Festschriften, special issues of journals, and similar works have been subject to peer review.
- Distinctions between conference presentations or exhibitions that are or are not reviewed (juried) for scientific merit, and those subject to some other form of selection. Since the criteria for acceptance of conference presentations and exhibitions vary widely, some explanation of the selection criteria for these types of peer-reviewed works is quite useful for reviewers.
- Contributions made by the candidate to books or articles with multiple authors, especially when these comprise a large fraction of the total work submitted.

Works "in press" or "accepted for publication" may be referenced in the file and should be accompanied by a letter from the editor or publisher confirming their acceptance.

Reference in the file to manuscripts or grant proposals submitted but not yet reviewed should be included if the department or discipline considers this an appropriate measure of

research/scholarly/creative activity. Because of the long delays often associated with the publication of scholarly books, it may be wise to submit an unpublished manuscript or excerpt in the file if this is only available evidence for research/scholarly/creative activity. Where possible include reviews of the manuscript by experts from outside the University. The same may be true for other works (such as films) that require an especially long time to complete.

The variety of scholarly publication and presentation formats and venues is increasing; for example, posters and Web publications are becoming increasingly common. Whatever the form or outlet for the candidate's scholarly/creative work, it is critical to describe the process of professional review that has resulted in its acceptance for dissemination, display, or performance.

Best Practices in Service

Faculty are encouraged to maintain documentation of their service contributions. The annual activities report asks candidates to separate service components into the three categories of public, professional and university service. The description of those categories is found in UAF Regulations Chapter III. It is not unusual for activities to overlap categories or be difficult to define. If in doubt, faculty should consult with their mentor or department chair for the best placements of each activity into a single service category. Service activities outside the university should be explained and assessed – the significance of serving on grant review panels or exhibition juries will not be obvious to every reader. It is quite appropriate to request letters commenting on the candidate's external service, especially if this has been significant – for example from an officer of a professional society, a journal editor, or an officer of a funding agency. Of particular importance is the presentation of evidence on the impact of service activities.

Candidates for promotion to professor are expected to have provided substantial service to the university as well as to the department, college/school and profession. As with other expectations for promotion and tenure, specific unit criteria may specify other requirements.