

Faculty Evaluation

For the College, faculty evaluation processes play critical roles in the shaping of the institution. Particularly for pre-tenure and tenure reviews, the formal review process can mean that a faculty member receives an “appointment without limit” or, alternatively, is asked to leave the faculty. Faculty evaluation, hence, is nearly as central to the formation of the College as recruitment and hiring. Again, chairs play important roles in the faculty evaluation.

Chairs tend to play more central roles in evaluation processes at early stages in a faculty member’s career. Chairs are at the heart of the College’s mentoring program, which is the first stage of the evaluation system for a tenure-track faculty member. Mentoring can be extended to visiting faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and part-time faculty members too. Generally, while the Provost or an Associate Provost hires and often rehires visiting and part-time faculty members, they do so based on strong input from department chairs or program directors. Chairs’ interaction with tenure-track faculty in their first years at Kenyon and with visiting and part-time faculty is where they are likely to commit the greatest number of hours of evaluating courses, offering advice, and serving as a sounding board. And because many visiting and part-time faculty members are either reappointed or moved into tenure-track lines, the chair must be very attentive to the evaluation of part-time and visiting faculty. The College’s mentoring program is outlined in documents included in this section. Chairs **do** conduct optional reviews of visiting faculty members if those visitors so request. Chairs also conduct reviews for part-time faculty employed under the College’s Limited-Term Part-Time arrangements. In this section of the handbook we reproduce the faculty legislation that describes the review process for LTPT faculty and for those visiting faculty who have asked to be reviewed.

In the formal faculty evaluation system for the pre-tenure, tenure, and promotion reviews, chairs have these responsibilities:

1. Accompany the candidate to the meeting at which the evaluation process is reviewed by the Associate Provost;
2. Convene the departmental meeting at which the candidate’s qualifications for reappointment or promotion are discussed;
3. Draft the departmental letter to the Tenure and Promotion Committee;
4. Follow up with students and faculty who have not turned in their requested review letters in a timely fashion.

During the course of the review, the Provost or the TPC may ask the chair for additional information for the dossier. After the Board of Trustees has decided whether to reappoint or promote the candidate, the chair will be informed by Provost of the result of the review.

In Faculty Performance Reviews (FPRs), the chair has no responsibility other than potentially being asked for additional dossier information.

Because the departmental letter has very high impact in any review, the chair's responsibility to convene the meeting at which its contents are determined and to draft the departmental letter is weighty. We include here two pieces of advice penned by past TPCs about the departmental letter.

From the guidelines to letter writers composed by former TPC chairs:

DEPARTMENTAL LETTER

- Length: Up to three pages, single-spaced (1000-1500 words)
- This letter is a **critically important** contribution to the dossier, along with the candidate's vita and prospectus. Thus, this letter should clearly reflect that the department is familiar with and knowledgeable about the candidate's work in and progress in teaching, scholarship, and citizenship/service since the candidate's last review.
- Departmental letters will clearly explain the significance of the candidate's contribution to his/her scholarly field. This is especially crucial because the members of TPC reviewing the dossier need to be properly equipped to understand this because they cannot be as conversant in that candidate's field as his/her department colleagues.
- Departments should adhere to the procedures and process explicitly stated in the *Faculty Handbook* [*"The Departmental Letter, 2.3.9, "The Evaluators": F.*]. In particular, the Departmental Letter must clearly address whether and how exactly the candidate meets both departmental and collegiate standards under the three criteria: teaching, scholarly/artistic engagement, collegiate citizenship.
- The Departmental Letter should allow for diversity of views within the department.

From a report to the faculty by a past TPC chair:

Regarding the department letter: Chairs: If you have a candidate who is up for tenure and you don't already have date set for the departmental meeting, you are behind! Your colleagues need to be able to plan their class visits and examination of other information around the departmental meeting. So you must let them know in advance when you plan to hold it. Don't forget to give yourself time to write the letter and then get everyone to read, make suggestions and sign off on it before the deadline. In my experience this takes at least a week.

- All participating faculty members should sign the letter. Thus all faculty members in the department must feel that their view is being represented by the letter. If the department cannot reach a consensus, it is fine for the department letter to represent a minority view or a variety of views.
- At the same time, it is important for the department letter not just to be a précis of the individual faculty letters and/or opinions. It represents a corporate departmental view, based on a *discussion*, of how well the

candidate is doing in meeting the College's criteria in the areas of teaching excellence, scholarly or artistic engagement, and collegiate citizenship. (Under *no* circumstances should the chair just ask individual faculty for written input from which to construct a department letter!!!!)

- In the section on Scholarship, please make sure at least some of the members of your review team are *reading* the scholarship and evaluating it. A regurgitation of the CV does TPC very little good.
- Since there is now no outside letter on collegiate citizenship, service beyond the department is frequently given short shrift in dossiers. It is important that the department not ignore the candidate's service beyond the department. If members of the department are not already familiar with the candidate's contributions to faculty governance, it would also be helpful if someone in the department were to get in touch with one or more faculty members that are familiar with the candidate's service to the college so that this can service be considered by the department in its overall assessment of the faculty member's collegiate contributions.