

Virginia Tech Research Faculty Promotion Guidelines for Research Professorial Ranks

I. Purpose

The research faculty promotion guidelines are used for the promotion of research faculty into and within the professorial ranks. These guidelines are intended to encourage professional development of research faculty, recognize excellence in research scholarship, and foster collegiality amongst the faculty of the university. The guidelines outline a predictable administrative process that includes comprehensive peer review similar to the review of promotions for tenured and tenure-track faculty.

II. Promotion Process

A. Eligibility for Promotion

Faculty members in the “research professor” series as defined in the faculty handbook (http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/faculty_handbook.html) (Section 6.1.5) and those in other research ranks seeking promotion in to the research professor series (Sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3 and 6.1.4) are eligible for promotion in rank in accordance with these guidelines.

Non-professorial rank research faculty may be promoted to the research professorial ranks through the research faculty promotion process when the following criteria are met:

1. Credentials must meet the research professorial rank requirement as defined in Section 6.1.5 in the faculty handbook, (http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/faculty_handbook.html).
2. Possesses a doctoral degree or terminal degree appropriate to the field and credentials consistent with those for appointment to the rank of research assistant professor; and,
3. Have sources of continued funding and demonstrate outstanding accomplishments in appropriate activities. The *curriculum vita* together with annual reports, reprints of publications, reference letters, and other similar documents comprise a dossier, which furnishes the principal basis for promotion decisions. Besides consideration of specific professional criteria, evaluation for promotion should consider the candidate’s integrity, professional conduct, and ethics. Refer to Section III for details of a typical dossier format.

B. Dossier Submission

The supervisor or faculty member may initiate a request for promotion according to departmental procedures. Candidates should submit a dossier to the designated departmental committee by the deadlines established with the unit. Refer to Section III for details of dossier format. Consideration for promotion in rank is separate from the reappointment process.

C. Promotion Review

Departments should establish a schedule to review all research professorial positions to determine eligibility of promotion. A review cycle should include a development plan to aid in promotion readiness.

C.1. Academic Department

Research professorial faculty members being considered for promotion will have their dossiers reviewed at as many as three levels: (1) by a departmental committee and the head or chair; (2) by a college committee and the dean; and (3) by the Office Research and Innovation (ORI).

C.2. Non-Academic Department

As approved by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, a parallel process is used for promotion of a faculty member in the research professor series whose primary appointment is not in an academic department. Research faculty members being considered for promotion from non-academic units will have their dossiers reviewed at as many as three levels: (1) by a departmental committee and department head/institute director; (2) vice president or senior manager; and (3) by the Office for Research and Innovation (ORI).

Requests that are reviewed and approved by ORI as a university senior manager level review will be forwarded to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost for the third level university review. Promotions for regular research faculty appointments will be submitted to the Board of Visitors (BOV). Promotion of research faculty who are in restricted appointments follow the same review as those in regular appointment but do not require BOV approval.

D. Departmental Committee

A departmental committee consisting of peer faculty appointed by the department head or institute director will review dossiers considering the candidate's demonstrated experience and scholarship record. In cases where there are insufficient peer faculty at the department level, the dean or senior manager, may establish a committee to review nominations on behalf of a department.

The department has the responsibility to establish the composition of the department committee with the recommendation that there should be no less than three (3) faculty members appointed to the committee. The departmental committee may be the same committee serving in the tenure and promotional reviews of tenured/tenure-track faculty. However, the departmental committee serving in the review for promotions in the research professorial ranks should have direct knowledge of the candidate's research area. The department head or institute director is responsible for the selection and appointment of members of the committee when the department's personnel committee is not used. When possible, the committee should include departmental/college faculty members, ranked research faculty members from the department or institute, and within the university. When necessary, the departmental committee may include faculty from outside the university community who has knowledge of the field.

The departmental committee will elect a committee chair. All departmental committee members are expected to have a rank equal to or more senior than the proposed professorial rank of the candidate(s) under consideration by that committee. The departmental committee will review all candidates for promotional consideration during a particular year. A faculty member may not serve on any committee that is evaluating a spouse, family member, or other individual with whom the faculty member has a close personal relationship.

E. Review Cycle

Each college or vice president should establish a timeline for their respective areas that enables departments and colleges to complete reviews prior to the established deadlines. Specific deadline dates are published each year by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. College and vice president areas should submit dossiers and recommendation packets to the ORI by February 1 or by the published deadline for that promotion year cycle. Following the approval of the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation, dossiers and recommendation packets will be submitted to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost no later than March 1, to coincide with the review of dossiers for promotion of the tenured and tenure-track faculty.

F. Departmental Level Review

The departmental committee should establish and share the dossier review criteria process prior to start of the promotion cycle. The departmental committee has the responsibility to complete a thorough review of dossiers including letters of evaluation from external reviewers and internal supervisors, as appropriate, study of the candidate's dossier and written submissions, consideration of departmental

faculty input on the promotion, as appropriate, and preparation of a written recommendation to the department head or institute director. A recommended outline for the dossier is available from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost's website.

The department committee chair will coordinate communications and requests for information from candidates to complete the review process.

Should the department process include input from eligible faculty, members of the tenured faculty and professorial research faculty in equal or greater ranks within a department or institute should be afforded the opportunity to voice their opinion on each promotion application. Eligible research faculty may provide input only on promotional activities for other research faculty. The departmental committee should develop a consistent and shared method to seek and consider input from departmental faculty. An anonymous balloting process may be conducted in accordance with each department's or institute's procedures, and with the summary of results included in the recommendation packet to the department head or institute director. The departmental committee will be responsible for making appropriate dossier documents available to eligible departmental or institute faculty.

The departmental committee should develop and submit a written recommendation with supporting documentation, including any dissenting committee member opinion(s), to the department head or institute director. The department head or institute director will consider the recommendation packet(s), the input from faculty, as applicable, and may consult with the departmental committee prior to providing a written recommendation to the dean or senior manager.

For candidates approved for promotion by both or either the departmental committee and/or the department head or institute director, the department head or institute director will prepare a statement to submit to the dean or senior manager which includes:

- The candidate's dossier;
- A summary of the candidate's professional assignment and current role with the department or institute and Virginia Tech;
- A brief evaluation of the faculty member's scholarship, and contributions to his or her field;
- A summary of important accomplishments and an interpretation of significant contributions;
- An explanation of the procedures by which the candidate was evaluated; and
- The department head's or institute director's written recommendation for approval or non-approval.

Review by all parties should include considerations of achievement and impact on the candidate's area of research. Research is the primary professional role of research faculty members and achievement in this area is expected to receive primary consideration. Evaluation for promotion should consider contributions to the strategic mission and goals of the organization and the university more generally; the record of meeting or exceeding performance expectations including effectiveness in leading, supporting, and interacting with team members and personnel and related departments, and the candidate's integrity, professional conduct, and ethics.

The department head or institute director will provide a copy of his or her statement, departmental committee's recommendation, and the dossier to the dean or senior manager for each candidate recommended for promotion. Candidate's not recommended or approved for promotion by the departmental committee and/or the department head or institute director, should have a private meeting with the department head or institute director and receive a written response on the results of the process.

G. College or senior management review

Recommendations that have either or both the support of the department head or institute director and the departmental committee will be advanced to the dean or senior manager for review consideration. Collegiate research faculty promotion considerations should be reviewed at the college level, if

established, in accordance with other faculty promotion review processes before submission to the dean or senior manager.

Candidates who are denied promotion may appeal the decision to the dean or senior manager. The dean or senior manager may ask that a second committee review the case, uphold the decision, or over-ride the decision. The decision of the dean or senior manager will be final. Candidates whose reporting line are directly to the dean or senior manager will be referred to the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation for final review of the case to either uphold or over-ride the decision.

H. University and Board of Visitors Review

The dean or senior manager will submit the candidate's dossier and supporting documents, the departmental committee recommendation and department head's or institute director's statement to the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation by the published deadline in the spring term (Approximately February 15.) The Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation will review the recommendations of the dean or senior manager and forward the approved dossiers to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost for presentation to the BOV.

Dossiers that are not approved by the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation will be returned to the dean or senior manager with written explanation. The dean or senior manager may appeal the decision of the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, whose decision is final.

III. Candidate's Dossier

Each candidate for promotion will submit a dossier detailing his or her accomplishments and to the departmental committee. The *curriculum vita* together with annual reports, reprints of publications, reference letters, and other similar documents comprise a dossier, which furnishes the principal basis for promotion decisions. Typically, the dossier should contain the following elements:

- Candidate's statement
- Publication listing
- Invited scientific presentations
- Grants submitted/awarded
- Disclosures/Patents/Copyrights
- Professional activities/management certifications
- Graduate students (MS/PhD) supervised and mentored
- Postdocs supervised and mentored
- Education and outreach programs
- Service on university or departmental panels or committees, and for external organizations
- Other scholarly and/or program management activities
- References (Refer to Section IV regarding Peer Reviewers)

The promotion dossier should use the format for research faculty promotion required of all Virginia Tech faculty members. Helpful information on formatting, content, sample templates, and other aspects of the dossier can be found on the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost website at <https://faculty.vt.edu/promotion-tenure.html>. Research faculty should mark sections as "Not Applicable" or "N/A" that are not relevant to their responsibilities or scholarship since the format is designed for promotion and tenure and includes a number of elements that may not be relevant.

IV. Input of Peer Reviewers

Departmental procedures should clarify the criteria for using external reviewers for promotion consideration into and within the research professorial series. The procedures should include the minimum number of external reviewers (external to VT) required for promotion to each professorial rank, and if such are required for current eligible non-professorial faculty promotion considerations to the rank of Research Assistant Professor.

When external reviewers are used, the departmental committee chair will request the names and contact information of potential external reviewers from the candidate, which the committee may add to or remove from; however, the committee should confirm a minimum number of external reviewers in accordance with departmental procedures.

External reviewers are expected to have appropriate expertise to evaluate and comment credibly on the candidate's work, and should not be co-authors or collaborators on research projects. Reviewers are expected to be senior faculty members in the field from major research institutions or agencies, and, at minimum, should hold the rank of or comparable to the rank proposed rank of the candidate. Information on the reviewers' backgrounds should be included in the dossier package as it is advanced to subsequent stages.

The departmental committee chair will submit a final recommendation report ranking the list of reviewers to the department head or institute director for review and approval. The departmental committee chair shall provide external reviewers with the candidate's vita and representative publications. External reviewers will be asked to comment on the quality and impact of the candidate's research, publications, mentoring, patents or other professional accomplishments. The departmental committee chair may provide additional guidance to external reviewers as appropriate. Letters of evaluation from external reviewers shall be held in confidence. External review letters will not be shared with candidates, unless specifically required to do so by law.

V. Selection of New Faculty

Prior to the selection of either an internal or external candidate for the position of research assistant, associate, or full professor through either the competitive or non-competitive recruitment process, the departmental committee should review the candidate's *Curriculum Vitae* using established criteria and provide a written recommendation to the department head or institute director. Following approval by the committee and the department head, the dean or senior manager and then the Office Research and Innovation should approve the offer.

VI. Promotion Salary Adjustment

If funds are available, promotion in rank in the research professor series may be accompanied by a base salary adjustment. The department head or institute director is responsible for making a salary recommendation that is subject to university approval. Following final promotion approval by the BOV, the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation will notify the candidate in writing, confirming the promotion, the salary adjustment amount, and effective date, with copy to the dean or senior manager, as applicable, and department head or institute director. The department head or institute director should review and, if necessary, update the candidate's position description in the position management system to reflect the elevated rank and any changes in duties that result.

VII. Records Management

The letter confirming the approved promotion and salary adjustment, if requested, should be retained in the candidate's departmental personnel file. Promotion documentation, such as the candidate's dossier, nomination confirmation letter, departmental committee's recommendation letter, department head or institute director's statement, external reviewer evaluations, and recommendation of the dean or senior manager should be maintained separate of the candidate's personnel file and in the applicable departmental faculty promotion, merit and evaluation file maintained by the department or institute's administrative offices, as assigned.

VIII. Process Overview

Action	Deadline
Department establishes own internal deadlines for promotion consideration during 2023-24	Fall Semester
Department head or institute director convenes departmental committee	Fall Semester
Department Head or institute director requests dossier from candidates	Fall Semester
Candidate submits dossier to departmental committee	Fall Semester
Departmental Committee conducts review with external review and faculty, as applicable, input	By January
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (For college departments only) Departmental Committee makes recommendation to department head • (For institutes only) Departmental Committee makes recommendation to institute director 	By January
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (For college departments only) Department head reviews and makes recommendation to college committee • (For college department only) College committee makes recommendation to dean or senior manager • (For institutes only) Institute director reviews and makes recommendation to Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation 	By January
Dean or senior manager completes reviews and submits recommendation to Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation	By February 1
Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation completes review and submits promotion packets to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost	By March 1
Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost presents to BOV for approval	June
Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation informs candidate	June
Effective date of promotion (CY Faculty)	July 1
Effective date of promotion (AY Faculty)	August 10