

Expectations and Guidelines for Instructor Promotions College of Agriculture and Life Science (CALs)

Approved by CALs Governance Council 1-13-26

Promotion to a higher rank is granted to faculty members who have demonstrated excellence and innovation in instructional responsibilities and who show significant evidence of related professional growth and development. This includes an appropriate level of recognition through professional activities, and service at the unit, college, university, and/or national/international levels. Consideration for promotion may be requested by the faculty member or recommended by the unit. Terms of service required for promotion are detailed on the Provost's website at provost.vt.edu/faculty_affairs/promotion_tenure.html

Overview of the Promotion Process

An application for promotion receives five independent reviews, in the order shown:

- Unit Committee (see "Unit Committee" on page 2 of this document)
- Unit Leader
- CALs Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee
- Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Provost

Any application that receives a positive recommendation from either one or both the appropriate unit committee (see "Unit Committee" on page 6 of this document) or the unit leader continues to the college level. An application that receives a positive recommendation from the dean and the Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee (IPC) continues to the provost. The provost makes the final decision on applications reaching the final level.

An applicant is provided significant, detailed written feedback if failing to advance at either the unit or college level. Applications that fail at the unit level can be appealed, but only after having been turned down in at least two separate years. Details for appeals can be found in the Faculty Handbook. A negative decision at the college or provost level is final and cannot be appealed.

As stated in the Faculty Handbook, a negative recommendation on a promotion request need not translate into termination of employment. Indeed, a faculty member in the Instructor Series may remain at their current rank as long as their performance warrants continued employment and serves unit needs. In CALs, promotion and retention decisions are made separately, and being turned down for promotion does not preclude reapplying in a future year.

Specifics of the Promotion Process

The instructor promotion process proceeds according to a college-issued timeline, available on the last page of this document.

A candidate for promotion prepares a dossier describing their performance and accomplishments and submits it to the unit committee. This dossier is the document on which the request for promotion is judged at each of the five steps of the process. The culmination of each step is a letter containing a recommendation for or against promotion. As with other faculty promotion

processes at Virginia Tech, the format for the dossier will be prescribed by the provost. Candidates are referred to the [provost's webpage](#) for the instructor promotion dossier template. CALS requires that full Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) reports from courses taught by a candidate be included to cover the length of the candidate's instructional career at Virginia Tech up to the application for promotion, though not to exceed five years immediately preceding the application for promotion. Each instructor promotion dossier must include a unit committee and unit leader letter and content on the faculty member's peer review experience and/or contributions.

The unit committee reviews the dossier of each candidate and prepares a letter stating its recommendation for or against promotion. This letter should contain a thorough summary of the candidate's qualifications for promotion, reflecting the evaluation of the credentials by the committee with an informative, individualized assessment of the candidate's activities and contributions. In the case of a mixed vote, a minority report may be written. In the case of a negative vote, the letter will explain the basis for the negative recommendation.

The unit leader independently evaluates each dossier and the recommendation of the unit committee. Particulars of the candidate's professional assignment should be provided, including the percentage of that assignment to teaching, scholarly activities, service, and outreach. The unit leader's letter needs not repeat the information in the committee's letter but must address the candidate's performance relative to the unit's expectations for performance in the Instructor Series, explaining those expectations and the procedures by which the candidate was evaluated. If the unit leader's recommendation is not in agreement with the unit committee, this should be more fully explained and justified. If the unit leader concurs with a negative recommendation from the unit committee, then the process is ended, and the dossier does not move on to the college level; the unit leader provides written feedback to the candidate should this outcome occur.

The IPC will prepare a letter about each candidate whose application reaches the college level, stating its recommendation for or against promotion. Letters from the IPC should be detailed but succinct, as they need not repeat material well summarized at the unit level. In the case of a negative vote, the committee will explain the basis for the negative recommendation. The dean independently evaluates each dossier and the recommendations of the committee. The statement from the dean is an informative assessment of the candidate's accomplishments from the perspective of the college and the dean. The dean should provide a summary of the candidate's contributions to the unit, college, and university goals. If the dean concurs with a negative recommendation from the committee, then the process is ended; the dean provides written feedback to the candidate should this outcome occur. Otherwise, the dean writes a letter with their recommendation and forwards the dossier to the provost. If the dean does not concur with the IPC recommendation, the letter will explain the basis for the lack of concurrence. Notifications about instructor faculty promotion decisions are made by the provost according to a published calendar.

Unit Committee

Composition of the unit IPC and its procedures are determined by the unit within the bounds set by the provost and the faculty handbook (Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.4.1).

Suggested Best Practice

1. Conduct a two- and four-year review to ensure progress toward promotion.
2. Include a promoted instructor faculty member on the committee for review of instructor candidates.

CALS Committee

The IPC reviews both instructor and professor of practice applications for promotion. Committee members are nominated by CALS units and appointed by the Associate Dean and Director for Academic Programs (associate dean). The associate dean or their designee serves as a non-voting member. Minimum committee size will be five voting members. A faculty member serving on both the unit committee and the IPC may vote at only one of these levels as chosen by the committee member.

Instructors, Collegiate Faculty, or Professors of Practice with Administrative Expectations (25% or less)

The responsibilities assigned to faculty in the rank of instructor, collegiate faculty, and professor of practice are varied and due consideration must be given to their assigned responsibilities. For those with responsibilities in administration, extension and/or research, the evaluation of their performance will follow the expectations for these activities within the candidate's home unit. The following provides a general guideline for the types of administrative, extension, and research activities undertaken by faculty with such an appointment.

Administrative Areas

Program/Unit. Program or unit administration includes directing or leading a necessary organizational activity. Examples include: (a) a degree or academic program, (b) a laboratory or physical space used by multiple stakeholders. They display leadership and initiative, are forward thinking and creative in the development of curriculum and activities, demonstrate a high level of collaborative work, and follow all required standards, policies, and procedures. Evidence of impact should be documented with program outcomes, national or regional impact, awards, etc.

Expectations for the Instructor Rank

- Strong/innovative instruction as evidenced by such measures as student perceptions of teaching (SPOT) evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, activities in non-classroom settings, and peer reviews.
- Participation in unit activities related to programs of instruction, curricular development, and their relationships and integration with other programs at the university. Development of leadership within the unit on curricular issues and on evolving goals of the unit's instructional mission.
- Well-developed syllabi and instructional materials that reflect program goals and requirements.
- Pedagogical innovation in terms of course development and/or methods of instructional delivery. Promoting teaching excellence within the unit.
- Proficiency at understanding and evaluating research that applies to their field and translating it into classroom settings.
- Service at the unit, college, and university level.

Where appropriate to their assignment, instructors may interact with graduate students and interns, serve on graduate committees, and chair graduate advisory committees with the approval of the academic unit and the Graduate School. They may also be expected to serve on unit, college, or university committees as contributing members of their units and the broader university community.

A faculty member in the instructor series should work with their unit leader to clarify and detail the expectations of their position within the guidelines provided by this document. This series allows for flexibility of the emphasis placed on the various performance categories, so that positions may best be crafted to serve unit needs. It is the joint responsibility of the unit leader and the faculty member to ensure that written expectations are sufficiently clear.

Criteria for Promotion to Advanced Instructor

A minimum of five years of completed service within CALS, between ranks, is required to apply for promotion.

In addition to the basic expectations for the instructor rank, successful candidates for advanced instructor should demonstrate evidence of excellent instruction in the dossier. Evidence may be demonstrated via inclusion and reference to:

- Student evaluations
- Student responses to supplemental questions
- Peer reviews
- Annual unit evaluations
- Outcomes tracking
- Stakeholder input
- Candidate statement
- Other appropriate materials that follow university promotion guidelines

In addition to evidence of exemplary instruction, the successful candidate must also demonstrate both:

- Engagement with the unit and college program(s) and
- Increasing knowledge of teaching discipline and unit missions

These activities should be represented by a combination of at least two of the following teaching scholarship and service activities; at least one of the first two items on teaching scholarship must be exhibited. The strongest cases will show a pattern of these activities throughout the promotion period:

- Evidence of professional development; for example, participation in unit, college, or university workshops or study groups on teaching, completion of courses or short courses related to pedagogy or subject matter, or participation in professional conferences.
- Course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies; for example, contributing to a textbook or to online teaching materials available to others beyond the instructor's own classes, preparing a course for online delivery, or teaching a new course title.
- Contributions to the instructional program in the form of advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate students, graduate teaching assistant (GTA) advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.

- Service related to the instructional mission; for example, organizing or leading an undergraduate conference, outreach, or active participation with appropriate unit or college teaching committees.
- Unit service unrelated to instruction: significant contributions to unit governance or other activities specified by the unit.

Criteria for Promotion to Senior Instructor

A minimum of five years of completed service within CALS, between ranks, is required to apply for promotion.

Advanced instructors applying for the senior instructor position must demonstrate exemplary instruction in the dossier. Evidence may be demonstrated via inclusion and reference to:

- Student evaluations
- Student responses to supplemental questions
- Peer reviews
- Annual unit evaluations
- Outcomes tracking
- Stakeholder input
- Candidate statement
- Other appropriate materials that follow university promotion guidelines

In addition to evidence of exemplary instruction, the successful candidate must also demonstrate both:

- Leadership and significant scholarly achievement in the area of course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies; for example, contributing to textbooks or to online teaching materials available to others beyond the instructor's own classes, preparing a course for online delivery, or teaching a new course title.
- Continuous professional development: for example, participation in unit, college, university and professional workshops or study groups related to teaching, completion of courses or short courses related to pedagogy or subject matter, or participation in professional conferences.

In addition to the above expectations, the candidate must demonstrate significant accomplishments in **at least two** of the areas outlined below since their last promotion.

- Substantial contributions to the instructional program in the form of advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate students, GTA advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- Service related to the instructional mission; for example, organizing or leading an undergraduate conference, outreach, or active participation with appropriate unit or college teaching committees.
- Unit service unrelated to instruction: significant contributions to unit governance or other activities specified by the unit.

CALS Promotion Timetable – Instructor Series

August 1	The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee (IPC) is finalized with names of incoming members provided by the units to the dean’s office. The timeline and procedures are sent to all new and returning members.
September-October	Units determine instructors or professors of practice who will be considered for promotion. Candidates assemble dossiers in format provided by the provost and with any supplementary material required by CALS.
November 15	Notify the Associate Dean and Director for Academic Programs (academic dean) with names of instructors who will be considered for promotion by the unit.
November 15	Promotion dossiers for instructors or professors of practice submitted electronically to the academic dean. All dossiers are to be submitted, regardless of the outcome at the unit level.
Before December 1	Promotion dossiers of instructors or professors of practice advancing from the unit level are distributed to the CALS IPC.
December-January	CALS meeting to be scheduled during this block. One 2-hour meeting is typically sufficient unless there are many candidates.
February	Recommendations of CALS IPC are due to the dean.
February	Dean reviews dossiers and writes their recommendations for each candidate.
March	Dossiers receiving a positive recommendation at the college level are submitted to the provost by the dean.

Introduction

The job responsibilities of a person appointed to one of the instructor ranks in an academic unit are focused on undergraduate and/or graduate education, with the individual having at least a 50 percent teaching appointment. For instructors with responsibilities in administration, extension and/or research, the promotion process will consider their contributions and achievements in these areas. A master's degree is the usual minimum educational credential for an appointment to the instructor ranks. While the initial appointment is typically at the entry rank, prior experience may be considered for a recommendation of appointment at a higher rank with the approval of the appropriate unit committee and unit leader. Up to three years of similar instructional service at another institution may be counted toward the designated period required prior to review for promotion in rank. To calculate prior experience, CALS considers a full-time instructor as teaching six courses per academic year. Tenure will not be awarded at any of the instructor ranks and all service at any instructor rank will be excluded from the probationary period should the faculty member later be appointed to a tenure-track position.

Rank Definitions

Instructor. The instructor rank is the initial rank for appointment for a full-time or part-time faculty member whose primary responsibilities are to the instructional program. Assignments may vary depending on the faculty member's expertise, experience, and unit needs, but typically include primary responsibility for teaching courses, advising students, developing or revising courses and curricula, and fulfilling other instructional, administrative, or service responsibilities at the undergraduate level. Appointment at this rank consists of a series of one- or two-year consideration for promotion.

Advanced Instructor. Consideration for promotion to the rank of advanced instructor may be requested by the instructor or recommended by the unit based on excellence in instructional responsibilities, significant evidence of teaching scholarship, and substantial participation in fundamental unit activities related to teaching. Mentoring junior colleagues or graduate teaching assistants, student advising, course or curriculum development, or exemplary service are examples of ways in which instructors can make valuable contributions to the instructional programs in the unit.

Advanced instructors are expected to demonstrate mastery in teaching with significant impact on student learning and the unit's undergraduate programs. Publications are not typically an assigned responsibility of instructors' teaching appointments but teaching scholarship to enhance teaching skills of the instructor and/or peers is expected as part of the evaluation for promotion. Promotion to the advanced instructor rank is generally accompanied by a renewable three-year contract. A minimum of five years of completed service at the advanced instructor rank is required before consideration for promotion to senior instructor.

Senior Instructor. Senior instructor is the capstone instructor rank and promotion to this rank denotes exemplary instruction, demonstrated continued teaching scholarship and professional development, and significant contributions to undergraduate education. In addition to teaching courses, senior instructors may have considerable responsibility in mentoring junior colleagues or graduate teaching assistants, substantial student advising, overseeing course development or special instructional initiatives, or other non-teaching responsibilities reflecting their role as instructional leaders. Promotion to the rank of senior instructor is generally accomplished by a renewable five-year contract.