

Guidelines for Instructor Promotion

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Virginia Tech

Overview

The purpose of this document is to present guidelines for the process and criteria for promotion within the instructor ranks for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Promotion of an instructor to a higher rank is granted to those who demonstrate excellence in instructional responsibilities, show significant evidence of teaching scholarship, and participate substantially in fundamental unit activities related to teaching. All instructors are encouraged to review the faculty handbook for the most recently approved university promotion guidelines. The faculty handbook may be found on the provost website. The sections most pertinent to instructors are 5.1 Non-tenure Track Instructional Faculty Ranks and 5.24 Promotion Guidelines for Instructor Ranks.

Introduction

The job responsibilities of a person appointed to one of the instructor ranks in an academic unit are focused on undergraduate 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 of a full- or part-time faculty member whose primary responsibilities are to the instructional program. Assignments may vary depending on the faculty member's expertise and 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 renewable appointments with a minimum of five years of completed service before 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 a 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 instructor's 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 accompanied by a renewable five-year contract.

Basic Expectations for Instructor Rank

- Good instruction as evidenced by such measures as student perceptions of teaching (SPOT) evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, activities in non-classroom setting, and peer reviews.
- Participation in unit meetings and workshops related to programs of instruction.
- Well-developed syllabi and instructional materials that reflect program goals and requirements.
- Adherence to the Virginia Tech Principles of Ethical Behavior and the Virginia Tech Principles of Community.

Instructors eligible for promotion to a higher rank should demonstrate activities listed above and additional performance criteria specified within the appropriate rank below.

Criteria for Promotion to Advanced Instructor

In addition to the basic expectations for the instructor rank, successful candidates for advanced instructor should demonstrate **evidence of 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:

- engagement with the unit and college program(s) and

- increasing knowledge of the 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, GTA advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- **Service related to the instructional mission**; for example, organizing or leading an undergraduate conference, diversity initiatives, 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

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, diversity initiatives, 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.

Instructors with Administrative, Extension and/or Research Expectations

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

Administration Areas:

Extension. Extension activities include dissemination of information outside of the traditional classroom to help improve the knowledge and skills of clientele. Examples of these activities include: (a) organizing/leading workshops or training sessions for VCE staff and external clientele groups, (b) developing, acquiring, organizing, interpreting, and disseminating information in written, electronic, or oral forms in response to client needs, (c) serving on agencies or boards, and (d) conducting applied research to support their program. They display leadership and initiative, are creative in the practical application of knowledge, and demonstrate a high level of disciplinary expertise as well as the ability to assist clients. Extension scholarship may be documented by the influence on clientele behavior, quantity and quality of written and electronic publications, invited presentations, seminars and workshops organized and/or led, client evaluations or rating of extension programming and events, and awards.

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, **(c) what are other administrative roles instructors might have?** 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....need something here

Research. Research includes contributions that are appropriate to the instructor's areas of specialization and are respected by peers within and outside the university. Examples include: (a) pedagogical research and analysis related to instructional design and effectiveness, and (b) applied research that is of interest to Virginia clientele. Scholarship resulting from research is documented through means such as articles published in peer-reviewed journals, invited seminars, books or chapters in books or edited volumes, competitively-awarded grants, conference presentations, and professional awards.