INTRODUCTION

The Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) is an advisory body representing the Academic Senate in the faculty personnel review process. Rather than repeating criteria and processes explained elsewhere, these FAQ address issues CAP repeatedly encounters or that appear to be sources of confusion. They are not meant to be comprehensive and will be updated annually.

More comprehensive Academic Personnel procedures and practices are available at:

- APM: University of California Academic Personnel Manual (systemwide policies)
  https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/academic-personnel-policy/

- APP: Academic Personnel Procedures (UCI’s application of systemwide policies)
  https://ap.uci.edu/policies-procedures/app/

- Academic Personnel Guidance for Faculty on Preparing Files
  https://ap.uci.edu/faculty/guidance/

- COVID-19 FAQs for Academics
  https://ap.uci.edu/covid19/covid-19-academic-review-faqs/

- COVID-19 Stop the Clock (October 2020 Revision)
  https://ap.uci.edu/covid19stc-revision/

REVIEW STANDARDS

How will review practices account for the impact of COVID-19?


What are the criteria for acceleration?

The criteria for a full step acceleration are far-above-typical accomplishments in both the primary and one secondary area of review, and acceptable work otherwise. For the Professor series, this means unusually vigorous and accomplished research or creative activity beyond the specific disciplinary norm in the period of review, coupled with noteworthy excellence in teaching and/or service, and no substandard work in any area. A doubled number of publications, for instance, with simply adequate teaching and service would not constitute a
strong case for acceleration. For the Professor of Teaching series, this would mean exceptional teaching above assigned standards, as well as particularly outstanding scholarly productivity or service. Accelerations of a full step or more have been denied more often than granted. Acceleration in advancement files (to Above Scale and to/over Step VI) have particularly high expectations.

CAP will also strongly consider excellence in activity related to diversity and broad impacts of inclusivity as a criterion for acceleration if all other areas of review are similarly strong. CAP encourages the candidate to include their work in inclusive excellence and diversity where appropriate within the AP-10, and it is helpful if these contributions are also highlighted in the letters from other levels of review. CAP is interested in understanding the work UCI faculty do to promote student and faculty diversity and wants to receive evidence of work having broader impacts within the campus community and society.

**What are the standards for receiving an Above Scale merit?**

As the highest merit in the review process, Above Scale (Distinguished Professor) merits have a higher standard than a typical merit, but do not require the same exceptional work as Advancement to Above Scale career reviews. Generally, CAP requires evidence of continued significant research output and impact, very good teaching, and ongoing professional and campus service. An Above Scale Merit before the normal four year review period requires a particularly exceptional file and is very rare. See APM 220-18 (b. (4)) and APP 3-40 (Note 4).

A new set of standards for Above Scale merits has been implemented, effective for the 2020-2021 school year. See them here: APP 3-40, Appendix I, Note 4.

**What are the standards for a Satisfactory Fifth Year Review?**

Professor Step 5 and above are indefinite steps – faculty can remain in good standing without proceeding further through the step system. However, APM 200 requires that “every faculty member shall be reviewed at least every five years.” In lieu of recommending a merit, at the five-year point, this review can result in a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory recommendation.

To be deemed Satisfactory at an indefinite step, CAP expects to see evidence of contributions in both teaching and research (with effort commensurate to the faculty's primary area of emphasis), as well as evidence of meaningful service to the university. Faculty who are doing little to no significant work in one or more categories of review (research, teaching, service) are likely to be judged Unsatisfactory. Faculty who are negatively contributing to the university through substandard teaching or service might also be judged Unsatisfactory, even if they are producing meritorious research.
How does CAP view Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence (DEI) statements?

CAP values impactful DEI work as a positive contribution to research/creative activity, teaching, and service activities. This could include anti-racist, anti-sexist, or anti-white supremacy efforts; activities that directly work to increase inclusion and success of underrepresented students, staff, or faculty; or the work on programs, policies, or practices that challenge structural inequities. Such work should always be listed on the AP-10 and are the only activities where individual contributions can be listed under multiple categories (research, teaching, and service) on the AP-10. If this work can be adequately described on the AP-10, a separate DEI statement is not required.

CAP members most want to see DEI statements when faculty have substantive work to describe that does not fully lend itself to a discrete “bullet-point” listing on the AP-10. If included, a separate DEI statement should add helpful context and detail and allow CAP to fully credit work done in this arena.

CAP finds DEI statements less useful when the faculty member has not done substantial, proactive work. Interacting with traditionally underrepresented people on a majority minority campus in the course of fulfilling one’s duties is generally not evidence of proactive DEI work. For example, statements such as “I wrote a recommendation letter for a woman,” “many minorities take my classes,” or “I provide clinical care to Asian Americans” do not display convincing efforts at diversity, equity or inclusive excellence. Likewise, listing names of underrepresented students and postdocs as evidence of a faculty member’s own accomplishments can be problematic insofar as it risks reproducing an appearance of exploitation. Faculty should be cautious not to include personal details of others (family or medical history, personal struggles, etc.) in their statements.

In contrast, describing specific activities designed to increase equity, be more inclusive, or explicitly work towards the success of underrepresented community members are effective statements. DEI statements in review files should focus on actual efforts and accomplishments rather than personal beliefs or life histories.

**Research**

UCI has many truly exceptional researchers. Why shouldn’t they be rewarded for their research accomplishments, rather than being expected to also do significant teaching and service? Isn’t this a poor use of their time?

Research is the primary area of review in the Professor and corresponding series. Professors of Teaching have a primary area of review in teaching, and a secondary research criterion. However, UCI is a research university, not a research institute. As such, faculty have responsibilities beyond their research, and the university depends on their contributions to teaching and service as well as research. Consistent with APM 210 and 285 policy, CAP’s view generally is that we review faculty on three required areas: research, teaching, and service.
What is Completed Parts of Larger Works? When can work in progress be submitted?

The category of Completed Parts of Larger Works (AP-10, Section III.C.) is primarily aimed at faculty in book disciplines as a way to recognize that completing a book manuscript often takes far longer than a single review period. Accordingly, faculty can submit completed chapter(s) from a monograph for a merit review, with the understanding that these chapters, when the book is published, cannot count in a second merit review. In a rank review (for promotion or advancement), all previous materials, including completed parts of larger works submitted for merits at that rank, will be considered.

How does CAP view grants and outside funding? Can it replace publications as a form of research?

The awarding of a grant is not itself sufficient for advancement; rather, CAP primarily considers a grant to be a promise of future productivity and an indicator of the potential impact of research, especially if the grant is highly competitive. Peer-reviewed national grants such as NIH, NSF, NEH, DoD, Guggenheim, ACLS, Rockefeller, etc., are considered particularly strong recognition of research excellence. In some scientific fields, grant funding or renewal of funding greatly enhances a tenure case or advancement at higher levels. A lack of funding in a discipline that typically requires grant support for doing research may raise questions about the research effort and quality, as well as the stature of the individual in their field of study.

How do you evaluate the professional/creative activity requirement for Professors of Teaching? Do Professors of Teaching have to do research/creative work? Does it have to be in pedagogy? Are there standards for the published research for the Professors of Teaching series?

Professors of Teaching series faculty are expected to produce recognizable work in their area of expertise, such as creative activities, scholarship, professional accomplishments, etc. Like all faculty, Professors of Teaching may choose to do basic, applied, pedagogical, or any other generally accepted form of research in their field (APM 285.9a).

Professors of Teaching faculty are not required to engage in research related to pedagogy; published work in their technical specialty is acceptable as well. Scholarly activity in the form of publications is not just "nice;" it is required for all faculty in the Professors of Teaching series (as indicated in the APM 210). The quality of the work and its impact are the most important factors; quantity less so. CAP understands that Professors of Teaching have considerably less time to devote to such activities, so our expectations are adjusted accordingly.
Are external letters necessary when an Assistant Professor of Teaching goes up for tenure, and should those letters focus on classroom teaching or published research on teaching?

External letters are required for all promotion files. Ideally, the letter writers should address all aspects of the file, including classroom teaching, contributions to pedagogy, published research, and professional service. Teaching-related activities and performance are the most important areas for the letters to focus on, but CAP also relies on letter writers’ evaluation of the scholarly activity and service.

Particularly for tenure cases, the best practice is to solicit letters from tenured faculty who are also in the Professor of Teaching series at other UCs, or in similar positions elsewhere. CAP understands that this is a relatively small group of individuals to choose from so letters from tenured faculty in the Professor series may be necessary. In either case, be sure that the solicitation is clear about UCI’s expectations for Professors of Teaching faculty, as explained in APM-210.

**Teaching**

How do I write an effective Reflective Teaching Statement (RTS)?

CAP appreciates when faculty are truly reflective in describing how they create success in the classroom. CAP also understands that sometimes a well-intended teaching technique does not always get the desired results. The reflective teaching statement should describe both a candidate’s successes and where things may not have gone as well as hoped. A description of improvements the faculty member seeks to employ for future classes is also helpful. CAP and AP jointly wrote a guidance page for writing an RTS statement, found here: [https://ap.uci.edu/faculty/guidance/teachstatement/](https://ap.uci.edu/faculty/guidance/teachstatement/).

How worried should I be about a negative set of teaching evaluations?

CAP members understand that classes sometimes do not go as planned, whether because of individual circumstances or failed attempts at new pedagogies. It can be helpful if faculty address such issues in their Reflective Teaching Statement. Generally, blaming students’ lack of preparation or behavior is not seen as an effective strategy. Explaining how you might change your pedagogy to teach the students you have is more persuasive. Most persuasive is demonstrating improvement in teaching practices over time.
How does CAP use teaching evaluations when extensive research shows their biases?

CAP takes a holistic viewpoint of teaching evaluations (aka Student Evaluations of Teaching [SET] or Student Feedback on Teaching [SFT]) alongside a reflective teaching statement or other materials such as peer reviews. We discuss research on biases and best practices, and are generally skeptical of self-selected positive or negative student comments.

Individual CAP members may have varied viewpoints on the value of teaching evaluations, but in general, CAP pays more attention to students’ comments, especially those that are repeated over time (e.g., disorganized, lack of feedback, misses multiple classes; best class, exceptionally clear lectures, inspired me), rather than numerical evaluation scores.

In addition, CAP considers response rates and values faculty efforts to encourage students to fill out evaluations. Starting 2020-2021, CAP strongly encourages all programs to use standardized student feedback forms as endorsed by the Academic Senate, found on Eater Evals, linked here: https://sites.uci.edu/evals/forms/.

Can a lack of graduate teaching and mentoring be seen as unsatisfactory teaching?

CAP members understand that graduate student teaching and mentoring expectations vary across campus. Generally, CAP looks for teaching across the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. In some disciplines, graduate mentoring is an integral part of research productivity, while in others, graduate students do not work jointly with faculty on research projects. CAP also knows that some departments do not have graduate programs, or have small graduate programs in which only some faculty will have the opportunity to work with graduate students. On the other hand, faculty in fields with graduate mentoring and funding expectations who do not have their own advisees is a potential cause for concern. Candidates and departments are encouraged to explain their local situation to help CAP properly evaluate the candidate’s contributions within that context.

How are teaching contributions in Self-Supporting Degree Programs (SSDP) counted?

Teaching in self-supporting degree programs, although important, is not considered a part of a faculty member’s normal departmental teaching responsibility; they are considered overload courses and as such, not specifically counted under teaching in the personnel review. Faculty who teach in SSDP programs can discuss these teaching contributions and include evaluations but they must be labeled as such so that CAP and other levels of review understand that they are overload courses within the context of a larger teaching profile. Reference to teaching in SSDPs can be included in the candidate’s self-statement and department letters, again making sure that there is accurate representation of state-supported teaching program contributions compared to SSDP contributions.
**SERVICE**

Is Academic Senate service required?

For higher levels of the professoriate, especially, university service outside the department and to the wider campus is expected. Academic Senate service specifically is not required at any level, though significant service to faculty governance is appreciated. CAP recognizes that faculty can contribute to their schools and to the campus through many means, of which Senate service is just one.

How much service is required for each step?

The higher the professorial rank, the more service CAP expects, both in quantity and expansiveness (beyond the department). This is not an absolute rule – being a department chair is seen as significant service, even though it is department-based. The most effective files illustrate how engaged the candidate has been at service assignments: for what period of time did they serve; do they accept an assignment and never show up; do they show up but rarely contribute; or do they take leadership roles?

It is also helpful for the department to include whether there was compensation (e.g. teaching release, summer funding – but do not include detailed pay information) for various service roles. Compensation does not negate service (for example, CAP members are compensated with teaching release, but also consider that work as significant, meaningful service) but it does help CAP understand the extent of the extra effort involved.

**GENERAL REVIEW PROCESS**

Should I ask a CAP member...

- how my case is going or if my case has been reviewed yet? **No.**
- for advice on a colleague’s case? **No.**
- why they negatively voted on my or a colleague’s case? **No.**

If you have review-related questions when your file is in preparation or under review, you can consult with your Chief Personnel Officer, School Equity Advisor, or Chair. If they cannot answer your questions they should be able to direct you to the appropriate person to consult. CAP members may not talk with individuals about specific personnel cases, including specific cases cloaked as “hypotheticals.” All personnel file details and CAP deliberations are confidential.
My department knows me and my work much better than CAP. Why does CAP’s decision on my case differ from my department’s decision?

CAP’s role is to provide a campuswide faculty perspective. CAP reviews approximately 400 cases annually at all levels of the professoriate. This broader experience aims to promote equity across the campus.

What does an ideal department letter look like?

An ideal department letter does not repeat what the candidate has already presented; instead, it offers an analytic evaluation of the faculty member. CAP does not need to see lists of accomplishments or specific details that are already listed on the AP-10. It is more effective to explain in the aggregate, for example: Faculty Y’s research is good, judging by the two articles that make significant contributions to understanding ABC. Faculty Z’s teaching is exceptional, as evidenced by their serving as a pedagogical expert to multiple programs; revamping the introductory series in ways that increased student learning; and regularly teaching an overload of independent studies to graduate students. Faculty X’s campus service is very good as evidenced by chairing a department search committee and serving on a Senate committee for three years. Faculty X’s professional stature is outstanding, as evidenced by three article awards, five keynotes, and service as president of a national organization. External letters for Faculty X are positive, with several calling the work some of the best in the field, and four of five explicitly stating that this promotion is overdue.

For merits and accelerations, two pages of text is generally plenty for a department evaluation. For career reviews, it is rarely necessary for departments to present more than four pages of text, and less is often more effective.

CAP members do not need to see excerpts of student evaluations, external letters, or other materials that are already included in the personnel file. These are generally ineffective and come across as cherry picking rather than as a thoughtful analysis of the case.

Is there specific criteria for a promotion file that the department can include when requesting letters from external letter writers?

There is no specific criteria for promotions as it varies widely by discipline. Very generally, useful letters identify the impact of the candidate’s scholarly work and whether it is consistent with someone who would receive promotion at their own institution.

Sample letters for promotions, including language to include pertaining to the effects the pandemic may have had on the normal review of files, are found here: https://ap.uci.edu/policies-procedures/app/3-60/samplelettersofpromotion/.