

# College of Communication Arts & Sciences Criteria and Procedures for Promotion of Fixed-Term Faculty

This document specifies the criteria and procedures used by the College of Communication Arts & Sciences in reviewing applications for promotion for fixed-term faculty. Faculty in the fixed-term system are appointed to time-limited positions that may include responsibilities for teaching, service, outreach, student advising and/or research creative activities.

## Description of appointment types

### Academic Specialists

Academic specialists have significant and substantial experience in various areas and may be appointed for a variety of roles that often include teaching, curriculum development, research, outreach and/or advising. Specialists may or may not have earned bachelor's, master's or terminal degrees. Specialists may have fixed-term or continuing system appointments.

This document specifies the criteria and procedures used by the College of Communication Arts & Sciences and its affiliated units in reviewing applications for promotion of academic specialists. The University's Academic Specialists Handbook ([Link](#)) further describes the review process for those seeking promotion.

### Assistant Instructors

Assistant Instructors are faculty with significant and substantial teaching or professional experience in their respective fields without having earned a master's degree. An Assistant Instructor who earns a master's degree will receive a change of status to Instructor (notify your unit chair or director to request this change). Based on university requirements, Assistant Instructors are not eligible for the promotion processes outlined below.

### Instructors

Instructors are faculty with significant and substantial teaching or professional experience in their respective fields who hold a master's degree. An Instructor may be promoted to Senior Instructor. To warrant promotion, a candidate must have documented, exceptional performance across all assigned duties. An Instructor who earns a terminal degree will receive a change of status to Assistant Professor within the fixed-term system (notify your unit chair or director to request this change).

### Assistant Professors (fixed-term)

Assistant Professors in the fixed-term system are faculty with significant and substantial teaching or professional experience in their respective field with a terminal degree. An Assistant Professor may be promoted to Associate Professor. An Associate Professor may be promoted to Full Professor.

## College Criteria

Candidates for promotion under this process are expected to demonstrate teaching excellence and/or achievement or recognition in all areas of their appointment (e.g., research/scholarship, educational leadership, outreach, advising, creative activity, etc.). Advancement is based on an individual's responsibilities in functional area(s) based on assigned duties, and depends on an appropriately weighted assessment of that individual for each area of their responsibilities.

The candidate's initial or subsequent appointment description (the "offer letter") defines the basic area(s) in which the individual should devote energy and attention in career progression. The unit administrator should consult with the candidate at the start of the appointment, in subsequent annual review meetings, and when the candidate is eligible for a major evaluation to review their specific job description.

Major review and/or promotion to any rank is initiated by the unit administrator or the faculty member. All individuals to be considered for promotion are required to develop and maintain a portfolio documenting activities and accomplishments related to their duties as defined in their specific job description.

### **Promotion from Instructor to Senior Instructor**

An Instructor who has successfully completed at least 12 semesters of continuous service may be considered for promotion to Senior Instructor. Promotion is contingent upon a successful major review after six (6) semesters of continuous service. Under exceptional circumstances, promotion may be conferred before the completion of the 12 semesters at the Instructor rank. Early promotion must be requested by the unit administrator and approved by the Dean and the Provost. However, time-in-rank is not sufficient by itself to be considered for promotion. The leading criterion of promotion evaluation is sustained excellence across the duties of the appointment.

### **Promotion Beyond Assistant Professor (fixed-term)**

Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor and Associate Professor to Full Professor follows the same pathway: Candidates who successfully complete at least 12 semesters of continuous service in rank may be considered for promotion to the next rank. Promotion is contingent upon a successful major review after six (6) semesters of continuous service. Under exceptional circumstances, promotion may be made before the completion of the 12 semesters at the prior rank. Early promotion must be requested by the unit administrator and approved by the Dean and the Provost. However, time-in-rank is not sufficient by itself to be considered for promotion. The leading criterion of promotion evaluation is sustained excellence across the duties of the appointment.

A recommendation for promotion from associate professor to professor (fixed-term) should be based on several years of sustained, outstanding achievements in scholarship and education across the mission, consistent with performance levels expected at peer universities. Moreover, it is an expectation that individuals should provide leadership within the department, mentorship to junior faculty and graduate students, teaching of undergraduates, service on committees, and contribute to a flourishing intellectual life for those in the broader discipline, unit, college, and Institution. A reasonably long period in rank before promotion is usually necessary to provide a basis in actual performance to permit endorsement of the individual as an expert of national and international stature and to predict continuous, long-term,

high-quality professional achievement and University service. A professor must not only demonstrate disciplinary excellence, but also demonstrate commitment and effectiveness in larger institutional missions such as improving culture, inclusiveness, and equity both in the academy but also more broadly in society. Innovation brought to teaching and interdisciplinary team building that enables broader groups of people from the widest possible disciplinary or college perspective are also part of a move from individual work to being a university professor. Such a responsibility is even greater for those who earn promotion to full professor.

## Evaluation Procedures Leading to Promotion

1. Each year, during the required annual performance review, unit administrators should discuss with eligible candidates the criteria for review and their progress toward promotion in the context of the review timeline. The administrator shall provide a written copy of the annual review to the candidate. The administrator should also involve the individual in drafting any relevant memoranda of understanding (MoU) between units in the case of a joint appointment or joint assignment and provide a copy with the signature of all parties to the resulting MoU to the College and the individual, so that it may be included in their review materials.
2. For each review, the unit administrator will prepare a description of the candidate's assignment including the percentage of duties in assigned functional areas. This description will form part of the review portfolio and will be distributed to all individuals who evaluate the portfolio.
3. To be considered for promotion, candidates must assemble a dossier of achievements in all assigned functional areas and submit it to their unit administrator. Candidates must submit this documentation after the sixth semester to support the major review and after the 12<sup>th</sup> semester to support consideration for promotion. Candidates with joint appointments or assignments compile and submit only one dossier and submit it to their primary unit administrator.
  - 3.1. The dossier must include the appropriate Academic HR form. Candidates for promotion will be asked to provide materials for the review, using the "Recommendation for Reappointment, Promotion or Tenure Action form (Form on Progress and Excellence) **as a guide**. The dossier must include: a current curriculum vita, a reflective essay about accomplishments over the reporting period (5 page maximum), a representative sample of creative or scholarly work (if relevant to assigned duties), and evidence of excellence in performing assigned duties, e.g. significance, impact, and innovation of research/creative activities, instructional activities, and service. In cases where teaching is an assigned duty, the dossier should include a reflective teaching statement, showing ongoing development of effective instructional practices with examples.
  - 3.2. Individuals may submit evidence to substantiate excellence in their relevant activities; for example: significance, impact, and innovation of instructional activities, research/creative activities, a representative sample of scholarly or creative work, professional development, service, outreach, advising, curriculum development, program coordination or administrative activities. This should be a representative sample of the candidate's best work, and the candidate should reference these in the above narrative to provide context.
  - 3.3. When teaching is an assigned duty, the candidate's Teaching Portfolio must include the following items:
    - 3.3.1. Syllabi and instructional materials, such as heuristics, activities, multimedia learning materials, projects, assignments, etc., consistent with the unit's pedagogical aims.

- 3.3.2. Unit-approved student evaluations of teaching for all classes taught (every course, every section, every semester) to the unit review committee for analysis. (The College advises that reviewers should not afford undue weight to student evaluations. They should not be used as the sole source of data, but rather as one indicator of many in the portfolio.)
    - 3.3.3. If applicable, evidence of undergraduate and/or graduate student mentoring, including service on exam and thesis/dissertation committees, advising, curriculum development and professional development.
4. External review letters are not required for the initial major review following the sixth semester.
5. For promotion to the next rank, the unit must seek four review letters in support of the application. The candidate may suggest no more than half of the potential referee names to the unit administrator. The unit administrator should consult with any additional related unit administrator should the academic specialist hold a joint appointment or assignment. Three letters must be external to the unit or university.
  - 5.1. The letters should represent the relevant functional area(s) assigned to the candidate. If the position is a joint appointment, the letters should be representative of the work done in both units.
  - 5.2. Letters should follow the established peer review process and/or demonstrate recognition by peers and colleagues both within the university and regionally, nationally and internationally, whenever possible. External referees must be professionally capable to evaluate the candidate's dossier objectively and comment on its significance. All individuals will be independent of the candidate (e.g., not be former students of the candidate, not be former co-workers or otherwise have an established professional or personal relationship with the candidate) and have no personal interest in the outcome of the review.
  - 5.3. Whenever possible, letters should come from individuals who hold a rank above the candidate's current rank or the professional equivalent. Two names may be suggested by the candidate and the candidate may request that one to two individuals are not asked. The candidate is not informed of those individuals who provide letters of evaluation. (See also "Confidentiality of Letters of Reference for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Recommendations" in the Faculty Handbook.) [https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/external\\_ref-letters.html](https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/external_ref-letters.html)
6. A department-level review committee shall be established to conduct major review or evaluate the candidate's application for promotion and provide a recommendation. The committee is advisory to the unit administrator in this process.
  - 6.1. The review committee shall be composed of a minimum of three individuals knowledgeable about the position under review and the fixed-term system. The committee must include at least one fixed-term faculty member or academic specialist at or higher than the review rank. It may include academic specialists or faculty members of other academic personnel systems. If the candidate is jointly appointed or assigned, the review committee should include at least one member from each additional unit.
  - 6.2. If the candidate's primary department does not include a fixed-term faculty member or academic specialist at or above the review rank, a qualified reviewer must be recruited from another ComArtSci department or another MSU college.
  - 6.3. A review committee chair shall be named from among the committee members by the unit administrator. The unit administrator is responsible for making sure that the committee

members receive the candidate's review dossier and for giving the committee its charge. The committee chair is responsible for scheduling any meetings subsequent to the charge meeting. In addition, the review committee chair drafts the committee recommendation letter to the unit administrator. This is done in collaboration with the other committee members and all members will sign the final draft. All review materials and committee discussions remain confidential during and after the review itself.

- 6.4. The unit administrator shall provide the review committee with unit guidelines and direct the review committee to determine objectively the level of accomplishment and excellence in the relevant functional area(s) and duty assignments specified in the candidate's position description.
- 6.5. The individual under review must be provided an opportunity to confer with the review committee before it provides advice to the unit administrator.
- 6.6. The review committee will submit in writing to the unit administrator recommendations for personnel action and reasons for its decision. Minority opinion, if any, will be noted, and a minority report may be included. All members of the evaluation committee will sign the recommendations. Unit administrators should notify candidates of the recommendation and that their dossier has been forwarded to the College.
7. The unit administrator will convey a final recommendation to the Dean and the College Fixed-Term Promotion Review Committee by the announced deadline of a given year, submitting the appropriate Academic HR form and supporting materials, the review committee's recommendation, and copies of the written annual reviews of the candidate during the reporting period. This recommendation should provide an analysis of the candidate's performance in their assigned duties, as well as the leadership activities in which they have been involved.
8. The College Fixed-Term Promotion Review Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the Dean. It shall review the dossiers of all candidates for Senior Instructor; Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Full Professor in the fixed-term system; and all review stages in the Academic Specialist Continuing System (Probationary Review, Review and Awarding of Continuing Status, Senior Academic Specialist) set forth in the MSU Faculty Handbook section on the promotion of fixed-term faculty and the MSU Academic Specialist Handbook in the section entitled "5.3 Reappointment, Continuing Appointment, and Promotion," and in accordance with the College of Communication Arts & Sciences Guidelines concerning the promotion of fixed-term faculty and academic specialist review in the continuing system. It shall also review matters of procedure in the relevant unit's fixed-term promotion review process.
  - 8.1. The Committee shall consist of five members from the fixed-term or continuing system. The Dean, Associate or Assistant Deans, and Department chairpersons and directors shall be ineligible to serve on the Committee. Four members will be elected by the College fixed-term faculty and academic staff and one member appointed by the Dean. There shall be at least two Fixed-Term Faculty and at least two academic specialists. If a promotion to Full Professor, Senior Instructor- or Senior Continuing Academic Specialist is under consideration, then at least one member of the Committee must hold that corresponding respective rank.
  - 8.2. Elected Committee members shall serve two-year terms. To provide continuity on the Committee, the terms of Committee members shall be staggered.
  - 8.3. Elections for the following year's Committee shall be no later than November 15. Each Department of the College that does not have a continuing representative on the Committee

shall nominate one member of the faculty or academic staff. Each year's Fixed-Term Promotion Review Committee shall be called into session at the beginning of the spring semester by the Dean. After consultation with the Dean, the Committee shall elect a chair and determine its own operating and reporting procedures.

- 8.4. Deliberations and discussions of the Committee shall be confidential. If clarification is required concerning a candidate's credentials or a policy of a Unit, the chair of the Committee shall gather information through the respective unit chair or director.

The purpose of the review committee is to advise the Dean of the College on all recommendations for promotion of fixed-term or continuing system faculty made by academic units with particular reference to the following:

- a. the degree to which a candidate meets the standards and expectations of the candidate's academic unit;
- b. the degree to which a candidate meets the University's standards and expectations for promotion of fixed-term or continuing system faculty;
- c. the degree to which a candidate's case has been handled in a manner that is fair, equitable, and consistent with the specified procedures of the candidate's academic unit;
- d. the degree to which a candidate's file contains adequate documentation for review by the Office of the Provost.

8.5. In order to make its recommendation to the Dean, the Committee shall have access to:

8.5.1. All the materials submitted by the candidate to their respective unit review committee.

8.5.2. Any and all outside letters of recommendation submitted by the unit as part of the candidate's reappointment and promotion materials.

8.5.3. The report of the Unit Review committee regarding the candidate.

8.5.4. The letter of recommendation submitted by the primary unit administrator.

9. The College Dean will consult with the College Fixed-Term Promotion Review Committee and make a final recommendation to the Office of the Provost, according to the timetable for the academic year in question.

10. In the event that a promotion is not granted, the faculty member may reapply for promotion after waiting one annual cycle.

11. Suggested Timeline: Some units may choose to align this review process with their other promotion review processes, which may alter the materials submission deadline. If the unit does not do this, the timeline below should be followed. All units must clearly communicate a submission deadline in advance, so as to allow the candidate enough time to gather materials and put the dossier together.

- January the year prior to evaluation: Notification of eligibility.
- May 15 the year prior to evaluation: Dossier due to unit administrator to send for external review.
- October-December of evaluation year: Unit review committee charge (depending on due date of external letters).
- February 1 of evaluation year: Unit review due to College Dean.
- March 15 of evaluation year: College-level Committee review due to the Dean.

- May 1 of evaluation year: Dossiers with Dean's recommendation due to Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs (FASA).