

# Procedures for Guidance, Annual Evaluation, and Tenure Review of Probationary Faculty Department of Integrative Biology

*Revised December 2025*

## Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline the policies and procedures for the guidance and evaluation of probationary faculty members in the Department of Integrative Biology.

At the beginning of the probationary faculty member's appointment the Chair of the Department of Integrative Biology will give a copy of this document, "Department of Integrative Biology -- Procedures for Guidance, Annual Evaluation, and Tenure Review of Probationary Faculty", to the probationary faculty member. The probationary faculty member will also receive a copy of the [criteria for tenure and promotion](#) established by the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee, as well as a copy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison [Faculty Policies and Procedures \(FPP\)](#). Probationary faculty and members of the mentoring committee are encouraged to check the relevant websites of the Offices of the Secretary for Faculty and the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee for updates because their guidelines are often reviewed and revised to ensure that they contain the most timely information. In particular, the website for the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee contains a wealth of information on the tenure process, expectations, timeline, a checklist for tenure documents, and more. Copies of successful tenure dossiers are available for review by probationary faculty. These are very helpful and informative, and probationary faculty are encouraged to review them as part of their first year (see timeline at end of this document). FPP Chapter 7 is also highly relevant, as it describes procedural aspects of evaluation and promotion and outlines the rights and obligations of probationary faculty and UW Madison.

## Mentorship and Guidance

### Formation of a Mentoring Committee

The Department Chair, in consultation with the probationary faculty member and other senior faculty, will form a mentoring committee within the first semester of the appointment of the probationary faculty member. The mentoring committee is charged with providing oversight and review of the progress toward tenure and helping the probationary faculty member anticipate, identify and solve problems that could impede progress toward promotion. The mentoring committee will also assist with keeping the probationary faculty member aware of any changes in the expectations for promotion that might occur during the probationary period; information and updates are posted online at the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee page (see links in the Overview paragraph at the start of this document). In addition, the mentoring committee is expected to be a resource for the probationary faculty member, providing guidance and feedback during the entire probationary period. The mentoring committee will meet formally with the probationary faculty member at least twice per year, but may meet more frequently if desired by either the committee or the probationary faculty member. The purpose of the annual meeting is to review the progress and accomplishments of the probationary faculty member and to discuss any problems or concerns perceived by either the probationary faculty member or the faculty mentors.

The mentoring committee will consist of at least two tenured faculty members appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with the probationary faculty member. Members of the mentoring committee will be faculty members who are relatively closely aligned with the probationary faculty member's research interests. The probationary faculty member may request that the department chair consider alternative faculty mentors or add a third mentor, who may be an additional tenured faculty member from within or outside the Department. If at any time the probationary faculty or a member of the mentoring committee feels that the assigned faculty mentors are no longer appropriate, they may make a request to the Chair to assign different faculty mentors to the mentoring committee.

The Department Chair will designate one member of the mentoring committee as the chairperson. The chair of the mentoring committee is responsible for making sure that the tenure process follows the

recommended timeline and process, and will maintain communication with the Department Chair and probationary faculty member to ensure that the process is organized and transparent.

Other faculty are also encouraged to provide informal mentoring and support beyond the formally designated committee. For example, probationary faculty may meet with other faculty in this or other departments to seek advice and guidance, and the mentoring committee may seek input on mentoring and the tenure process from faculty with recent experience on the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee.

## **Evaluation**

### Annual Evaluation

Beginning in the second year of appointment, the mentoring committee will prepare a written evaluation based on an annual meeting with the probationary faculty member. The annual meeting will be one of the two mandatory meetings held between the probationary faculty member and the mentoring committee, as determined by the mentoring committee in consultation with the probationary faculty member. This evaluation will cover all aspects of academic performance relevant for achieving tenure, including research, teaching, and service. For this evaluation, the probationary faculty member should prepare 1) a current CV; 2) an overview of submitted manuscripts and grant proposals; and 3) course syllabi and teaching evaluations. Additional supporting documents (e.g., statements of research, teaching, and service, copies of representative publications) may also be requested by the mentorship committee. The mentoring committee will determine which documents are necessary and request these documents three months prior to the Executive Committee meeting when the review will be conducted. It is the responsibility of the probationary faculty member to provide these materials to the mentoring committee at least one month prior to the Executive Committee meeting when the review will be conducted.

The annual evaluation will be presented by the mentoring committee to the Department of Integrative Biology Executive Committee in Closed Session. Copies of the evaluation and supporting materials (as defined above) will be distributed to facilitate review and discussion. During the discussion of the evaluation, any concerns, as well as recommendations for remedying those concerns, will be appended to the evaluation. Following discussion of the evaluation by the Executive Committee will vote to approve the evaluation. Following this vote, a written copy of the final evaluation will be provided to the probationary faculty member within 5 working days. The Department Chair and/or mentoring committee will also provide the probationary faculty member with a written copy of the final evaluation (including any concerns and recommendations) approved by the Executive Committee; the Chair and/or mentoring committee may also meet with the probationary faculty member in person to discuss the evaluation. If particular concerns are raised in the report, the probationary faculty member should work with the mentoring committee to compose a written plan for addressing those concerns within 2 months of the meeting when the evaluation is discussed. This plan will be presented to the Integrative Biology Executive Committee for review and approval during closed session during the first faculty meeting following the submission of the plan.

### Peer Review of Teaching

Members of the mentoring committee will provide periodic evaluations of the probationary faculty member's teaching. In accordance with the guidelines of the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee, these reviews will begin in the second year of the faculty member's appointment and will be made by members of the mentoring committee who are themselves accomplished teachers. Teaching evaluations can also be obtained from individuals outside of the mentoring committee (including beyond Integrative Biology) if the evaluators are highly accomplished teachers who can provide thoughtful, constructive review of the candidate's teaching. Once initiated in the second year, an evaluation will optimally occur every year, with the goal of amassing multiple reviews of the same course, preferably by the same evaluator for each course, for 1-2 courses taught by the candidate. For candidates who pursue a tenure case with excellence in teaching (i.e., teaching as the primary area of scholarship), additional documentation of teaching excellence will be required as suggested by the guidelines of the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee (candidates will be instructed to

consult those guidelines for additional information).

#### Duration of the Probationary Period (i.e., the tenure clock)

The tenure clock (probationary period) is set at hire and runs for a maximum of seven years, with the tenure decision coming in the sixth year. Experienced faculty (e.g., faculty hired from another institution) may be hired with credit for up to three “tenure clock” years. When a new faculty hire has prior service, the department and dean have flexibility in setting the probationary period. They may determine how much of that previous service, if any, is to be counted toward the maximum UW-Madison tenure clock (see guidelines on the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee webpage for additional information). These details will be discussed with the new hire and will be part of the offer letter they receive. For example, a new faculty hire with three years of prior experience at another institution may have an offer letter that specifies that the last two years of service at their previous institution will count toward the tenure clock at UW Madison.

Probationary faculty may also apply for an extension of the probationary period (i.e., an extension of the ‘tenure clock’) for a number of reasons, including childbirth or adoption, significant elder or dependent care obligations, medical circumstances, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal research mandates (e.g., funding cuts, loss of federally collected data), or other extenuating circumstances beyond their control that may have adversely affected progress toward tenure.

#### Evaluation for Consideration of Reappointment

In the second year of the initial three-year probationary period, in addition to the usual annual meeting and report, the mentoring committee will make a recommendation to the Department of Integrative Biology Executive Committee regarding a year-by-year reappointment of the probationary faculty member (see timeline at end of this document). The ballot is taken in accordance with the Department's requirement of a majority affirmative vote by a quorum of the Executive Committee. Within 5 working days of the meeting, the Department Chair informs the mentoring committee and probationary faculty member in writing of the vote of the Executive Committee. In reviews of probationary faculty, the Department of Integrative Biology adheres to the procedures outlined in FPP 7.07. In the case where the reappointment is not supported, the Department of Integrative Biology follows all policies as outlined in FPP 7.08 through FPP 7.13.

### **Promotion and Tenure**

Assuming that the probationary faculty member's appointment is renewed, and the mentoring committee is supportive of going forward with a request for tenure, the mentoring committee, in consultation with the probationary faculty member, will decide on the timing of the tenure request. For new Assistant Professors, it is typical for this request to occur in the fifth year (see Typical Timeline, below). After receiving approval from the Department's Executive Committee, the process of assembling the tenure dossier begins. The steps of that process are detailed below, and include obtaining external evaluations of the candidate's scholarship and accomplishments, as well as assembling the components of the dossier. Significantly, the bulk of the dossier is expected to be assembled by the probationary faculty member. It is also strongly recommended that the mentoring committee touch base with the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee at this time to check on the meeting schedule in the next year and to alert them to the possible submission of the dossier.

#### Process for Obtaining External Reviews

All divisional committees require external reviewers as part of the evaluation toward granting tenure and promotion. The Department of Integrative Biology follows the criteria set forth by the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee, soliciting letters from “arm's-length” external reviewers to yield at least 5, but no more than 8, reviews. Criteria for arm's-length letters are clearly defined in the guidelines provided by the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee; the mentoring committee is expected to check the latest Biological Sciences Divisional Committee guidelines for additional information and to keep abreast of changes in letter requirements. Arm's-length reviewers are expected to be well-established scientists (e.g., Full Professors or late Associate Professors), usually with academic

appointments at peer universities. However, well-established scientists in other positions (e.g., NGOs, Federal positions, research institutes) may also be selected depending upon the nature of the probationary faculty member's scholarly achievement.

In addition to letters from arm's-length reviewers, non-arm's-length letters may also be requested for the dossier. Current guidelines allow up to 3 such letters. Because the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee only considers the documents in the tenure dossier when making tenure recommendations, non-arm's-length letters can help provide additional clarity and context that is useful for review. For example, when probationary faculty have many collaborative/multidisciplinary projects, or when probationary faculty collaborate extensively with previous mentors/advisors, non-arm's-length letters can help explain the role of the probationary faculty member in those collaborations to help the Divisional Committee evaluate candidate independence and leadership.

The mentoring committee will work to identify highly qualified external reviewers whom they believe are capable of performing an objective assessment of the Assistant Professor's progress toward tenure and potential for future significant accomplishment. This process will begin by assembling a list of reviewers to solicit, with the goal of assembling this list at least 1 year prior to the submission of the tenure dossier. To arrive at 5-8 arm's-length letters, mentoring committees will aim to generate a list of 10 reviewers. To generate this list of reviewers, the mentoring committee will begin forming a list of potential reviewers independent of the probationary faculty member. Next, the mentoring committee will solicit suggestions from the candidate for potential reviewers, as well as ask the candidate to identify any individuals that may have conflicts of interest, may be unable to provide a fair, objective review, or may not meet arm's-length criteria. The mentoring committee will then integrate their list with information from the candidate regarding suitable and unsuitable reviewers and will present this information to the Department Chair. The Chair will select which reviewers to contact, aiming to ensure that no more than half of the reviewers were suggested solely by the candidate. The mentoring committee will also determine, in consultation with the probationary faculty member, whether non-arm's length letters need to be solicited. The process of selecting arm's length and non-arm's length reviewers will be fully documented so it can be detailed as part of the Chair's Letter, which introduces the candidate's tenure dossier.

Once the list of arm's-length reviewers is complete, the Department Chair will solicit letters from these reviewers. Solicitation letters will be based upon the draft letter provided in the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee tenure guidelines, will be informed by input from the mentorship committee, and will include the curriculum vitae and the research and teaching statements from the candidate. Importantly, information regarding reviewers who were solicited but did not provide a letter should also be recorded for inclusion in the final tenure package. Brief biographies for each of the reviewers and a rationale describing why they were selected will be composed by the mentorship committee.

#### Compilation of the Tenure Dossier

A tenure dossier consists of many components, most of which can be assembled by the probationary faculty member. The probationary faculty member and mentoring committee are encouraged to examine the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee website to gain more information about these components. Probationary faculty should review these requirements during the first year of their appointment, as they will want to carefully document important relevant activities throughout the years of their probationary appointment to facilitate preparing the dossier. For example, dossier requirements may ask the probationary faculty member to note their percentage contribution to each publication, to provide reviews from submitted grant proposals, etc. In consultation with the mentoring committee, the probationary faculty member will assemble the components of the tenure dossier that are under the purview of the probationary faculty member (e.g., arm's-length letters and some other materials are not available to the probationary faculty member). The draft dossier and supporting materials will be made available to the mentoring committee. It will be the mentoring committee's responsibility to work with the Departmental Administrator to perform the final assembly, review, and revision of these documents to help ensure completeness and compliance. The mentoring committee will also assist the Chair by reviewing the cover letter for the dossier.

## Evaluation and Review Criteria

Tenure is granted based on significant, documented activity and accomplishments in research, teaching, and/or service, and convincing evidence that these will continue in the future. The Department of Integrative Biology Executive Committee will expect solid performance in these three main areas of professional activity, and will encourage a professional trajectory consistent with department and disciplinary norms. Below are typical criteria the Executive Committee will consider as appropriate to the individual's appointment, discipline, and division. One resource that may be particularly helpful is to view past successful tenure dossiers. Appointments to review these dossiers can be made by contacting the Divisional Committee coordinator within the Office of the Secretary of The Faculty. For additional information regarding criteria for promotion, several resources should be consulted. Many of these resources are available on the Secretary of the Faculty's resource page for Assistant Professors. These include the following:

- FPP 7.14.
- The University's Guidelines for Recommendations for Promotion or Appointment to Tenure Rank for the Biological Sciences Division

As is the standard in the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee, the Department of Integrative Biology Executive Committee will consider significant impacts to the candidate's productivity, including the COVID-19 pandemic, federal research mandates, and other significant impacts of more than a year. Below are typical criteria the Executive Committee will consider, although we note that considerations related to the tenure process are necessarily variable due to the considerable variation in disciplines and appointments. For example, faculty with previous experience at other institutions may have appointments where several years of their previous experience is counted as part of their tenure period at UW-Madison (see earlier section on the tenure clock). Incorporation of this material into the dossier is facilitated by the standardized dossier format (example dossiers available for review also often contain faculty with previous experience) and members of the mentorship committee are always available to provide guidance. In general, probationary faculty members should always consult the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee website and FPP policies for additional information, especially because guidelines are frequently reviewed and revised to ensure that they provide the most up-to-date information.

### *Teaching*

- Teaches undergraduate and/or graduate courses and receives promising and positive evaluations from students and peer reviewers.
- When opportunity for improvement is present, seeks professional development, course revisions, and other steps to improve performance and student outcomes.
- Where appropriate, advises undergraduate students.
- Effectively mentors and trains graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

### *Research*

- Conducts and leads research that is published and otherwise shared and validated by peers (e.g., scholarly, peer-reviewed publications); research productivity should be near departmental and disciplinary norms, and/or trajectory should demonstrate increasing output and impact towards soon reaching those norms.
- Individual contributions to collaborative research, proposals, and projects, as well as to the broader field, should be clearly evident.
- Seeks and secures sufficient financial and other resources to conduct research; note that unsuccessful competitive research funding and awards can provide evidence of peer validation. Expectations for securing extramural funding must align with paylines and success rates of funding entities. Biological Sciences Divisional Committee guidelines stipulate that reviews from up to the three most-recent funded grants must be provided in the tenure dossier, and other grant-related materials (e.g., lists of submitted proposals that were not funded, reviews from unfunded proposals) may be included at the probationary faculty member's discretion.
- Shows evidence of communication of research through professional talks at regional and

national conferences, departmental seminar series, or other venues.

#### *Service (including outreach)*

- Serves on departmental, college and/or campus committees or governance structures.
- Participates in scholarly and/or professional societies or activities (e.g., peer review of manuscripts and grants, society service).
- Contributes to the Wisconsin Idea through service to the state, nation, and/or world.

#### Evaluation and Review Process

Once the tenure dossier is assembled, the Executive Committee will meet in Closed Session to review the dossier and vote regarding whether to support or not support the tenure case. The dossier and any supporting materials will be made available to the Executive Committee at least 3 weeks prior to this meeting. During the meeting, the mentoring committee is responsible for leading the discussion of the tenure case. After discussion, a ballot is taken in accordance with the Department's requirement of a majority affirmative vote by a quorum of the Executive Committee. The results (support, delay, or not support) are then communicated to the Dean by the Department Chair, as per FPP 7.15. If the vote is to support a request for tenure, the Chair updates the Chair's cover letter for the dossier to include information regarding the outcome of the Executive committee vote and submits the dossier to the Dean for review and submission to the Biological Sciences Divisional Committee. If the vote is to not support the tenure request, the Department will follow FPP 7.08 and will also notify the Dean. The probationary faculty member will be notified in writing of the outcome of the meeting of the Executive Committee within 5 working days of the meeting.

#### **Typical Tenure Process Timeline**

##### First Year:

- Attend New Faculty Welcome and Tenure Workshop
- Appointment of mentoring committee
- Discuss and select faculty division (for Integrative Biology, this will typically be Biological Sciences)
- Peer review of teaching
- Start documenting and collecting material for tenure review (research, teaching, extension, outreach, service)
- Annual evaluation
- Make appointment with the Divisional Committees Coordinator to view sample dossiers

##### Second Year:

- Peer review of teaching
- Meet with mentoring committee (once per semester)
- Annual review and evaluation for re-appointment following initial 3-year appointment
- Update information for tenure dossier

##### Third and Fourth Year:

- Peer review of teaching
- Meet with mentoring committee (once per semester)
- Annual review and evaluation for reappointment
- Update information for tenure dossier

##### Fifth Year:

- Peer review of teaching
- Meet with mentoring committee (once per semester)
- Annual review and reappointment
- Departmental Executive Committee decides to bring candidate for promotion (2nd semester)
- Mentoring committee develops list of individuals for solicitation of referee letters
- Tenure review committee requests external referee letters (end of second semester)
- Update information for tenure dossier

Sixth Year, First Semester:

- Receipt of external letters
- Assembly of draft tenure evaluation document by mentoring committee
- Departmental Executive Committee reviews, meets, and votes on tenure
- Department finalizes dossier, Chair writes cover letter
- Department submits dossier to Dean for approval (check deadlines to ensure timely submission)
- Dean approves transmittal to Divisional Committee