205 Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty

Approved by Board of Trustees
Effective Date: ____________, 2020
Responsible Division: Academic Affairs
Responsible Office: University Provost
Responsible Officer: University Provost

I. Purpose

This policy establishes criteria and procedures for recognizing merit through academic promotion at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU or University) so that promotions are made objectively, equitably, and impartially.

The listed criteria represent minimum University standards for promotion. College and/or department policies relating to the promotion process must meet the criteria specified herein, but may exceed and be more specific than the minimum University standards. All college and department policies will be reviewed for consistency with this policy by the Provost and approved by the President. Approved college and department policies will be made available online. Materials are submitted using the University’s digital faculty activity software of record, unless the Provost has approved an exception.

II. Applicability

This policy relates only to promotion of MTSU faculty who are tenured or tenurable. It does not apply to temporary, instructor, coordinator, clinical, or research appointments. Policy 202 Faculty Definition, Roles, Responsibilities, and Appointment Types defines non-tenurable faculty appointments.

III. Definitions

The following general definitions of words and terms used in this policy are subject to further qualification and definition in the subsequent sections of this policy or those of colleges and departments.

A. Department. Academic unit (Department or School)

B. Chair. Departmental officer, which includes School Director.
C. Teaching. Any activity that fosters and facilitates student learning, including, but not limited to, instruction, student advising and/or mentoring, assessment, and the development of course materials and courseware.

D. Research/Scholarship/Creative Activity. Research/scholarship/creative activity encompasses the studious inquiry, examination, or discovery that contributes to disciplinary and interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge and is disseminated to an appropriate audience. Research/scholarship/creative activity may include, but is not limited to, disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities that focus on the boundaries of knowledge, field-based scholarship, creative activities (e.g., media production, performances, or other artistic creations), the scholarship of teaching and learning, and grant-writing to support such activities.

E. Service. Service encompasses University service, professional service, and public service.

   1. University service refers to work other than teaching and research/scholarship/creative activity done at the department, college, and/or University level. Participation in University service is expected of every faculty member.

   2. Professional service refers to the work done for disciplinary professional organizations or for the teaching profession generally.

   3. Public service, the University’s outreach to the community and society, involves sharing professional expertise and should directly support the goals and mission of the University.

F. Rebuttal. A candidate may add a letter of rebuttal, addressing and providing evidence of errors of fact, within ten (10) business days of the posting date of the letters from the Chair, college tenure and promotion committee, and/or the Dean, as recorded by the faculty activity software.

IV. Promotion in Rank

   A. Promotion in rank recognizes a candidate’s achievements and future potential. Promotions are to be made strictly on consideration of merit. Promotion in rank at any level is not simply a reward for length of service, but rather recognizes the fulfillment of achievement and higher expectations at each academic rank.

   B. Promotion is awarded only by positive action of the Board, pursuant to the requirements and procedures of this policy.

   C. Tenure and promotion are not formally linked, but typically promotion to associate professor comes with tenure.
D. Candidates who hold tenure at the rank of associate professor and are applying for promotion to the rank of professor may withdraw from the review process at any level without prejudice and apply at a later date.

V. Procedures for Promotion Recommendations

A. General Guidelines

1. Consideration for promotion originates in the department to which the faculty member has been assigned. Candidates for promotion submit the Outline of Faculty Data (OFD) and other supporting materials detailed below using the University’s faculty activity software, unless the Provost has approved an exception.

2. After submission of the OFD, the only materials that may be added to the file are letters from the department committee, Chair, college committee, Dean, and Provost and any rebuttals, due within ten (10) business days of the posting date of the letters of recommendation at each level.

3. Members of department and college tenure and promotion review committees may not make individual recommendations concerning candidates to administrators or other review committees.

4. Each spring semester, the Office of the Provost will issue the dates for faculty review and evaluation for the upcoming academic year; and department and college committees will be provisionally elected pending the Board’s awarding of tenure and promotion.

5. Faculty members whose tenure-track appointment begins in January may negotiate at the time of hire whether service for that semester will be counted for promotion.

6. Policy 816 Nepotism will apply to all levels of the promotion process.

7. Qualified Privilege of Academic Confidentiality for Promotion Review Committees

   a. All those serving on committees that make evaluations are expected to observe the highest appropriate standards of confidentiality concerning deliberations. Tenure and promotion review committees have qualified privilege of academic confidentiality against disclosure of individual promotion votes unless evidence casts doubt upon the integrity of the committee. This policy will be interpreted in a manner consistent with the Tennessee Public Records Act, as recorded in T.C.A. § 10-7-101 et seq.
b. In general, no qualified privilege of academic confidentiality is recognized for proceedings outside of the University. The records created during the promotion process are subject to disclosure pursuant to T.C.A. § 10-7-503 et seq., and information regarding the process may be sought by subpoena or court order.

B. Department Review

1. All departments will use approved policies that cover the structure, annual election of committee members, and operating procedures of the department tenure and promotion review committee. A copy of these policies will be available online. At a minimum, these policies will include the following:

   a. Committee members must be tenured;
   
   b. All full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the department may vote on committee membership;
   
   c. Temporary non-tenure-track faculty may not vote on committee membership;
   
   d. Candidates for tenure and the Chair may not be members;
   
   e. A committee chair will be elected by the members of the committee;
   
   f. Whether there will be academic rank requirements for committee membership must be stated in the department tenure and promotion policy.

   If the staffing requirements described in the department policy cannot be met (as in the case of an inadequate number of tenured faculty or of specified academic rank), an alternate committee composition may be proposed by the department subject to approval by the Dean and Provost prior to review of the candidate application(s).

2. The review process for promotion recommendations at the department level consists of separate and independent considerations by the department tenure and promotion review committee and the Chair.

   a. The department tenure and promotion review committee will consider each candidate’s qualifications for promotion using the approved department, college, and University criteria and shares their recommendation with the Chair.

   b. The Chair considers each candidate’s qualifications for promotion using the approved department, college, and University criteria and shares their recommendation with the department tenure and promotion committee.
If the two recommendations differ, the Chair and committee will meet to discuss, later submitting independent recommendations to award or deny promotion, copying the candidate.

C. College Review

1. All colleges will use approved policies that cover the structure, election of members to terms of three (3) years, and the operating procedures for the college tenure and promotion review committee. A copy of these policies will be available online. At a minimum, these policies will include the following:

a. Colleges with six (6) or more departments will elect one (1) faculty member from each department to the committee; colleges with five (5) or fewer will elect two (2) faculty members from each department to the committee. (To provide for committee rotation, those tenured faculty elected to serve on the first college tenure and promotion review committee will draw numbers to determine whether they serve for periods of one [1], two [2], or three [3] years; one-third of the members will rotate off the committee each year.)

b. Committee members must be tenured;

c. All full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the department may vote on committee membership;

d. Non-tenure-track faculty may not vote on committee membership;

e. Chairs may not be members;

f. A committee chair will be elected annually by the members of the committee;

g. Each college’s policy must state rank requirements for faculty members serving on the college committee.

If staffing requirements described in the college policy cannot be met (as in the case of an inadequate number of tenured faculty or of a specified academic rank in a department), an alternate committee composition may be proposed subject to approval by the Provost and Faculty Senate president prior to review of the candidate applications.

Each Dean will provide the Faculty Senate president with the names of those elected to the college tenure and promotion review committee according to the timetable specified in the tenure and promotion calendar. The Faculty Senate president, in consultation with the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, may appoint up to two (2)
additional faculty members to each college tenure and promotion review committee to ensure diversity and appropriate representation.

2. The review process for promotion recommendations at the college level consists of separate and independent considerations by the college tenure and promotion review committee and the Dean.

   a. Upon receipt of the recommendations and other materials from the department tenure and promotion review committee and Chair, the college tenure and promotion review committee will consider each candidate’s qualifications for promotion using the approved department, college, and University criteria. Following its review, the college committee shares their recommendation with the Dean.

   b. The Dean considers each candidate’s qualifications for promotion using the approved department, college, and University criteria and shares their recommendation with the college tenure and promotion committee.

   If the two (2) recommendations differ, the Dean and committee will meet to discuss, later submitting independent recommendations to award or deny promotion, copying the candidate.

D. Provost’s Review

1. The Provost will consider each candidate’s qualifications using approved department, college, and University criteria; reviews the recommendations of the department tenure and promotion review committees, the Chair, college tenure and promotion review committees, and Dean; and forwards all materials, along with their recommendation to the President, copying the Dean, Chair, and faculty member.

2. The appeals process, outlined in Policy 206 Tenure and Promotion Appeals Process, may begin after the Provost has notified the candidate of their recommendation. The President’s letter with the promotion recommendation will be sent after the appeals process is completed.

E. President’s Review

The President considers each candidate’s qualifications using approved department, college, and University criteria; reviews the recommendations of Chair, department tenure and promotion review committee, college tenure and promotion committee, Dean, and Provost for each candidate; and makes recommendations to the Board. The President will notify candidates, Chairs, Deans, and the Provost of his/her recommendations. When notified of official action by the Board, the President will
provide written confirmation of the Board’s award of promotion to the candidates, Chairs, Deans, and the Provost.

VI. Criteria to Be Considered in Promotion Recommendations

A. General Promotion Criteria

1. The minimum criteria that distinguish among academic ranks are defined in Policy 202 Faculty Definition, Roles, Responsibilities, and Appointment Types which also includes exceptions to minimum academic rank and terminal degree designation.

2. Faculty members being considered for promotion must demonstrate commitment to the goals of MTSU. As institutional citizens, they will adhere to high ethical standards. Prior to review of the OFD and supporting materials by the departmental committee, Chairs may include formal documentary evidence of breaches of University policies (e.g., 10 Ethics and Code of Conduct; 26 Discrimination and Harassment Based on Protected Categories Other than Sex, 27 Misconduct, Discrimination, and Harassment Based on Sex Including Pregnancy, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity/Expression; 211 Misconduct in Scholarly Activities and Research; 204 Tenure, Section VIII.G.) as part of the review process. To be included in the materials for review, such evidence must be shared with the candidate at the time it is added to the materials.

3. For promotion to the rank of associate professor, the candidate will demonstrate high-quality performance in teaching and either research/scholarship/creative activity or service, and quality performance in the other. College and department criteria, however, may require high-quality performance in both teaching and research/scholarship/creative activity, in which case those requirements will supersede the University’s. Typically, the candidate applies for promotion to associate professor at the beginning of the sixth (6th) year.

4. For promotion to the rank of professor, the candidate will demonstrate sustained excellence in teaching and high-quality professional productivity in both research/scholarship/creative activity and in service. The candidate will demonstrate a level of excellence in either research/scholarship/creative activity or service that is recognized at the national level. National recognition must be defined in department policies. The candidate is eligible to apply for promotion for professor at the beginning of the fourth (4th) year as an associate professor.

B. Outline of Faculty Data and Supporting Materials

Candidates for promotion will submit their OFD (including Workload Part A) and all appropriate materials to support activities in teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service.
C. Teaching

Because effective teaching is essential for advancement in rank, promotion should not be granted in the absence of clear evidence of a candidate’s teaching ability and potential for continued development.

1. Candidates for promotion must demonstrate high-quality performance in teaching. Departments may assign varying degrees of significance to the following activities:
   
a. Performance in teaching as evaluated by students and peers;
   
b. Performance in advising and mentoring;
   
c. Performance in assessment activities;
   
d. Improvement of their own courses and the larger curriculum;
   
e. Effectiveness in teaching methods, including efforts to improve pedagogy;
   
f. Supervision of specialized instructional activities (student research/scholarship/creative activity, service learning, experiential learning, thesis and dissertation direction, internships, student teaching, etc.);
   
g. Honors received and recognition for teaching;
   
h. Seeking internal and external funding for instructional activities;
   
i. Contributions to teaching, e.g., textbooks, articles, workshops, presentations, instructional technology resources.

2. Documentation

   a. Supporting materials will include the candidate’s summary of activities and accomplishments in teaching, syllabi for each unique course, evidence of evaluation by faculty peers, and the one-page quantitative summaries of student evaluations for each course section evaluated since the initial appointment or most recent promotion.
   
   b. Other supporting materials may include selected course documents, assessment materials and reports, grant proposals, additional student input, results of alumni surveys and/or student exit interviews, and textbooks or published contributions to pedagogy.

D. Research/Scholarship/Creative Activity
1. To be awarded promotion, candidates must present evidence of, at minimum, quality research/scholarship/creative activity. Departments and/or colleges may assign varying degrees of significance to the following activities based upon their policies:

a. Participation in research/scholarship/creative activity, which may include collaboration with undergraduate and/or graduate students;

b. Submission of internal and external funding proposals for research/scholarship/creative activity.

2. Documentation

a. Summary of activities and accomplishments in research/scholarship/creative activity.

b. Supporting materials may include, but will not be limited to, the following:

(1) Reputable, high-quality peer-reviewed publications including articles, monographs, books, electronic media, and other published works; non-peer-reviewed publications may be submitted and will be evaluated accordingly;

(2) Funded external or internal grants, with weight given to grants from external agencies and organizations;

(3) Written reviews and evaluations by qualified peers of performances, compositions, and other creative activities;

(4) Published programs or reviews of public performance or public display;

(5) Presentations to one’s professional peers at regional, national, or international meetings/conferences;

(6) The scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL), including textbooks, educational articles, and instructional technology resources, and innovative contributions to teaching;

(7) Unfunded proposals for external grants, where the documentation supports the quality of the proposal.

c. Documentation must be included to support a designation of accepted and/or in press.
E. Service

1. To be promoted, candidates must demonstrate, at minimum, quality service. Departments and/or colleges may assign varying degrees of significance to the following activities based upon their policies:

   a. University service refers to work other than teaching and research/scholarship/creative activity performed at the department, college, and/or University level. University service includes, but is not limited to, meaningful participation on department, college, and University committees. University service also includes taking a role in shared governance, such as service as a Faculty Senator, on a specially appointed task force, and/or on a University search committee. It also includes activities that contribute to the recruitment, retention, progression, graduation, and post-graduation career placement of students as well as professional development of faculty.

   b. Professional service refers to the work done for disciplinary professional organizations or for the teaching profession generally. Service to the profession includes, but is not limited to, association leadership, accreditation review, journal editorship, article/manuscript/grant proposal review, guest lecturing on other campuses, and other appropriate activities. Examples of significant service would be that done by an officer of a professional organization or a member of the editorial staff of a journal.

   c. Public service, the University’s outreach to the community and society, involves sharing professional expertise and should directly support the goals and mission of the University.

2. Documentation

   a. Summary of activities and accomplishments in service.

   b. Supporting materials may include, but will not be limited to, the following:

      (1) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the candidate’s service, as judged by its impact. This should include indices of the success of the service activities, in terms of improvement of communities, programs, operating agencies, production processes, or management practices; of satisfaction with the service provided by the candidate; and of the magnitude and complexity of the work.

      (2) An external appraisal of the candidate’s local, regional, national, and/or international stature.
(3) Evidence of submission of applications seeking internal and external funding for service activities, funded internal and external grants, and University submitted proposals.

Revisions: June 5, 2017 (original policy); December 5, 2017; __________, 2020.

Last Reviewed: _______ 2020.

References: Policies 10 Ethics and Code of Conduct; 26 Discrimination and Harassment Based on Protected Categories Other than Sex, 27 Misconduct, Discrimination, and Harassment Based on Sex Including Pregnancy, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity/Expression; 202 Faculty Definition, Roles, Responsibilities, and Appointment Types; 204 Tenure, 206 Tenure and Promotion Appeals; 211 Misconduct in Scholarly Activities and Research; 816 Nepotism; T.C.A. § 10-7-101; 10-7-503; Tennessee Public Records Act.