

March 7, 2022

### **FAS Tenure-Track System: Implementation Plan**

Listed below are some key changes to the FAS tenure-track system, subsequent to the FAS's 2020-2021 review of the processes for promotion to associate professor and to tenured professor.

**All but two of the changes noted below will go into effect as of July 1, 2022. As described below, item I.C (“Associate Professor Criteria”) will go into effect in AY 2023-2024, and II.E.4 (“Peer Observation”) will go into effect once the FAS has developed a well-thought-out plan informed by expertise in peer observations.**

Overall, the changes listed below serve several goals mentioned in the report of the FAS Tenure Track Review Committee (TTRC). For instance, these changes aim to:

- Generate more complete and useful information for departments, the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP), and the *ad hoc* committee to use when assessing tenure-track faculty for promotion.
- Generate more complete and useful feedback for tenure-track faculty to use in their ongoing development as scholars, teachers, and citizens and in preparing for their promotion reviews.
- Align and create more continuity, as appropriate, between the second-year review, associate review, and tenure review, so that information can build continuously and be utilized, as appropriate, by candidates and those who evaluate them.
- More clearly differentiate teaching, advising, and mentoring; generate better-quality information about candidates' efforts in these areas; and support a *developmental* view: that these are activities that all faculty can learn and get better at over time.
- Mitigate potential inequities by providing clearer guidance throughout review processes, formalizing some practices that may be variably engaged in, and employing new or improved templates.
- Reduce “wasted” time previously spent (e.g., by departments and external evaluators) on meeting requirements in the tenure-track system that may have been unduly onerous.
- Encourage greater tenured-faculty engagement with tenure-track colleagues and the promotion processes.
- Increase transparency and faculty trust in the tenure-track system.

The changes below are organized in four categories:

- I. Changes to Associate Reviews
- II. Changes Common to Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews
- III. Changes to Tenure Reviews
- IV. CAP and the *Ad Hoc*

#### **I. CHANGES TO ASSOCIATE REVIEWS**

##### **A. External Letters in Associate Reviews**

1. Number of required letters: The number of required external letters in associate reviews will be changed from “three to five” to “five.” These five letters need to be “arm’s length.” The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* will provide guidance on what constitutes “arm’s length.”

## **B. Feedback to Candidate After Associate Review**

1. Feedback: To improve the quality of feedback that the candidate receives after their associate review (please see II.A.1, “Complete Feedback”), a better template for the associate-review feedback letter will be provided to departments. The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* will also formalize that an in-person meeting (between the candidate, the review committee chair, the department chair, and the candidate’s formal mentor) should take place after the associate review to provide further feedback and mentoring.

## **C. Associate Professor Criteria**

Note: The changes noted in C1 and C2 below will not go into effect until AY 2023-2024. This timing will allow assistant professors who are currently undergoing second-year reviews (i.e., in AY 2021-2022) to receive feedback in their second-year review that anticipates those changes. This gives current tenure-track faculty time to respond to feedback and to otherwise prepare for the retooled associate review.

1. Criteria: As TTRC recommended, the associate professor criteria will be changed from “sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major institution within three to five years” to “sufficient promise and achievement to potentially qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years.”

2. Revised Template for Soliciting External Letters: In keeping with TTRC’s recommendation, the template for external letter writers for associate reviews will include the associate professor criteria, the tenure criteria (for reference), and language such as the following: “As a secondary matter, we would appreciate your assessment of whether Professor [NAME] may even qualify for tenure at Harvard now. We expect that this would be very rare at this career stage. We also understand that we would need to undertake further review to make a rigorous determination.” As noted in TTRC’s report, asking for evaluators’ views on this question may help departments to identify cases that might benefit from acceleration.

## **II. CHANGES COMMON TO ASSOCIATE REVIEWS AND TENURE REVIEWS**

### **A. Continuity Between the Second-Year Review, Associate Review, and Tenure Review**

1. Complete Feedback: The FAS strongly encourages departments to give *complete* feedback to tenure-track faculty throughout their time on the tenure track. To be useful, feedback should include both positive comments, where appropriate, and honest, constructive, and concrete suggestions about areas to work on and how to improve.

2. Feedback Letters: To help foster continuity between reviews, the feedback letter to the candidate, following the second-year review, will be shared with the associate review committee, and the feedback letter from the associate review will be shared with the tenure review committee. This provides a fuller

context for understanding how the candidate has developed and also sheds some light on the mentoring they received.

3. Defining the Field: Given the importance of the field definition and its effect on who the external letter writers and (in tenure cases) comparands are and how a candidate's case is viewed, the candidate and department should work together over time (ideally from the second-year review onward, and certainly when the candidate is actively preparing for the associate review), to understand and clearly articulate a definition of the candidate's field. The department should work with the candidate to make sure the field definition is sufficiently broad that the candidate's impact beyond their own specialization can be determined. Ideally, the field definition speaks to the "Venn diagram" of the candidate's impact, i.e., not only the immediate subfield in which they work, but the adjacent subfields and fields affected by this work.

The field definition from the previous review will be shared with the next review committee to aid their efforts in defining the field (with the understanding that this definition may evolve over time). During promotion reviews, the review committee chair, department chair, and divisional dean/SEAS dean should actively engage in reviewing the field definition early in the process.

The candidate should be mentored in articulating their *impact* in the field (as well as in teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship).

4. Overlap in Review Committee Members: To the extent possible, to foster continuity between reviews, departments should strive for some overlap between the associate review committee members and the tenure review committee members. There should not be complete overlap between the two committees, to ensure fresh views at the tenure review stage and to also encourage more tenured-faculty engagement with tenure-track colleagues.

5. Overlap in External Letter Writers: To gain a better sense of how the candidate has developed over time, a subset of letter writers from the associate review must be solicited to write letters for the tenure review. No more than half of the external letter writers for the tenure review should have written for the associate review. Different solicitation letters for those who wrote, or did not write, for the associate review, will be provided in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.

6. Developmental View of Teaching, Advising, Mentoring: Please see II.E.2 ("Developmental View") below.

7. Case Statement Discussion of Continuity: For associate reviews and tenure reviews, departments will be asked to describe in the case statement measures they took to foster appropriate continuity between reviews (e.g., overlap in external letter writers; the encouraged overlap in review committee membership; progressive development of the field definition over the course of the three reviews; efforts to reach a developmental understanding and assessment of the candidate's teaching, advising, mentoring, etc.).

8. Relative Weights: As a general principle in all promotion reviews (and to address TTRC's request for clarity on this matter), the FAS does not adhere to a formula for the relative weights of research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship in promotion decisions. The FAS is looking for high-impact contributions in each of these areas, and "impact" can take many forms.

## **B. Communication Between the Candidate and Review Committee in Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews**

1. Window of Communication: As it can be helpful to hear directly from candidates if the review committee needs clarification on aspects of the candidate's materials, a finite window of time will be established in the associate review and tenure review processes when the candidate and review committee may have limited communication with each other. This communication should occur after the review committee's preliminary review of the candidate's materials and before the committee brings the case to the department to discuss whether to proceed with the review. Beyond this point, there will be no further communication between the candidate and the review committee. Questions will be sent to the candidate in writing by the department chair. Written responses should be received by a designated time and will become part of the final dossier.

## **C. Candidate Statements in Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews**

1. Statements: While TTRC suggested seven candidate statements for associate reviews and tenure reviews (i.e., research, teaching, advising, mentoring, service/citizenship, diversity/inclusion/belonging, Covid), candidates will be asked to write three statements (research; teaching, advising, and mentoring; and service/citizenship). The service/citizenship statement encompasses both service work and substantive discussion of how the candidate has contributed to diversity, inclusion, and belonging in all areas of their professional life, both to date and with regard to their future plans.

The FAS's philosophy regarding Covid statements has consistently been to not require people to talk about their Covid experience but to instead provide candidates with extra time and resources to help them meet the criteria for promotion. Moreover, to protect tenure-track faculty, the templates for external letter writers in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* explicitly instruct evaluators not to take candidates' Covid extensions or teaching relief into account when assessing their performance. Candidates are free to comment if they wish—in their research, teaching/advising/mentoring, and service/citizenship statements—on any ways that the pandemic may have, for instance, shaped their research directions, influenced their approaches to teaching, advising, or mentoring, or affected the choices they made in their service/citizenship.

## **D. External Letters in Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews**

1. Rank of External Letter Writers: It remains a requirement that all external letter writers in associate reviews and tenure reviews must be tenured faculty. It will no longer be required that all letter writers be full professors. However, we encourage departments to seek letters from full professors. Furthermore, no more than half of the arm's length external letters may be from tenured associate professors. External letter writers do not themselves need to be viewed as tenurable at Harvard but should be eminent scholars whose opinions are valuable to understand. As always, recipient lists must be approved by the divisional dean/SEAS dean.

2. Letters from Collaborators and Mentors: To capture what is often valuable feedback, departments will be allowed to solicit letters from collaborators and mentors (whether they are at Harvard or other schools) in associate reviews and tenure reviews. Such letters do not count towards the number of required "arm's

length” letters (i.e., five in associate reviews and ten in tenure reviews). Instead, letters from collaborators and mentors are held in a separate category and are meant to supplement the required letters.

3. External Evaluation of Teaching: As letter writers often feel they are not qualified to comment on the candidate’s teaching, the candidate’s teaching statement will continue to be included in the materials that are sent to external (and “internal external” as defined in Section III.A.2 below) letter writers, but the template soliciting their evaluation will not specifically ask letter writers to comment on teaching (although they are free to do so) and will make clear that the FAS is able to assess teaching internally.

## E. Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring

1. Distinct Categories: The FAS endorses TTRC’s view that teaching, advising, and mentoring are distinct categories of activity and assessment and encourages departments to consistently differentiate between these activities rather than use the terms interchangeably or in amorphous ways. In particular, the FAS distinguishes between these activities as follows:

- **Teaching: “Teaching” refers to classroom teaching of undergraduates and graduate students.**
- **Advising: “Advising” refers to the many ways that faculty provide intellectual guidance to undergraduates and graduate students outside of the classroom.** This includes, and is not limited to, such things as (for undergraduates) senior thesis advising or concentration advising and (for graduate students) dissertation advising, advising on Ph.D. oral exams, etc.
- **Mentoring: “Mentoring,” in contrast to the intellectual advising described above, refers to faculty efforts to support the professional development and career development of undergraduate students, graduate students, TFs, and postdoctoral fellows.**

2. Developmental View: The FAS endorses a *developmental* view of the candidate’s teaching, advising, and mentoring—that these activities are learned over time, and as important as “achievements” in these areas are the effort, thoughtfulness, and willingness to improve that a faculty member demonstrates. The FAS encourages departments to take an expansive view of all the different ways that people can contribute to the teaching, advising, and mentoring missions. Faculty have different strengths and inclinations and contribute to these missions in different ways.

3. Teaching Portfolio and Teaching Statement: The FAS endorses TTRC’s recommendations concerning teaching portfolios and teaching statements.

- Portfolio: Departments are encouraged to provide clear and consistent guidance from the point of hire onward about what a strong teaching portfolio consists of. Teaching portfolios should contain different types of courses to show that the candidate can contribute to a range of teaching needs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The courses should span a range of formats such as seminars, lectures in introductory courses, required courses, and electives. However, the portfolios should not be so broad as to prohibit faculty from teaching a course more than once, as teaching a course multiple times can help us see the trajectory of the faculty member’s development and should be encouraged.
- Case statements in associate reviews and tenure reviews should “include (1) an explicit statement of what the department’s teaching expectations are/were for the tenure-track faculty member, (2)

a discussion of how the faculty member was mentored in developing their teaching portfolio, (3) how the faculty member's offerings contribute to the department's stated goals, and (4) for context, how this teaching portfolio compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions." (TTRC Report, p. 62)

- Teaching Statement: Fuller, more useful guidance for writing a teaching statement will be provided in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*. For instance, the faculty member could discuss:
  - their reasoning and process in forming their teaching portfolio
  - how they define effectiveness in classroom teaching and the methods and approaches they used to achieve it
  - their course objectives, and an assessment of whether and how they achieved those objectives
  - how they engage with students at various levels (e.g., first-years, concentrators, graduate students)
  - any challenges they faced, and any modifications made to courses and teaching in response to feedback
  - any ways they have actively worked to improve their pedagogy (e.g., attending a teaching workshop, requesting assessment from the Bok Center, etc.).

4. Peer Observation: In addition to Q evaluations and looking carefully at course materials, pedagogical practices, the faculty member's care and thoughtfulness in approaching teaching, and their efforts to improve, the FAS endorses TTRC's recommendation that peer observation of teaching become a required form of evaluating teaching and that it be implemented throughout a faculty member's time on the tenure track, not just proximate to reviews.

Note: Peer observation as a method of evaluating teaching for promotion reviews will not formally go into effect until the FAS has developed an implementation plan. Successful integration of peer observation into our review processes depends on a well-thought-out plan informed by expertise. The FAS will work with the Office of Undergraduate Education, the Bok Center, and other entities to develop guidance that can then be systematically implemented across the FAS. In the meantime, departments are welcome to engage in peer observation as part of their general departmental mentoring practices.

#### 5. Advising and Mentoring:

- Who is Solicited: Regarding which advisees/mentees should be contacted for feedback in associate reviews and tenure reviews, the FAS will continue its practice of soliciting "current and former students and, as relevant, postdoctoral fellows, including those who have moved to another group." However, while the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* (using the old nomenclature now superseded by the definitions of "teaching," "advising," and "mentoring" noted in Section II.E.1, "Distinct Categories") currently asks the candidate to submit "a list of past and present undergraduate theses supervised, past and present graduate students for whom the candidate has or had primary responsibility, current and former postdoctoral advisees (as relevant, and including those who moved to another group)," the FAS recognizes that this language does not adequately capture the range of

ways in which faculty advise and mentor undergraduates and graduate students. The AY 2022-2023 *Handbook* will ask the candidate to submit a list of undergraduate and graduate advisees/mentees broadly construed, and the solicited students can describe for themselves the nature of their advising/mentoring relationship to the faculty member.

- Template Emails: To create more consistency in both the kind and quality of information that is gathered from advisees and mentees, templates for the solicitation emails that are sent to advisees and mentees will be provided in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.
- Summaries of Feedback: Summaries of the advisee/mentee feedback will continue to be included in the case statement for associate reviews and tenure reviews, but the divisional/SEAS office will review the summaries to ensure that they adequately capture the feedback. The advisee/mentee letters in their entirety, though anonymized, will be shared with the divisional/SEAS office, the Office for Faculty Affairs, and the FAS dean. The letters will continue to not be included in the dossier.
- Context for Feedback: To provide context for the advisee/mentee feedback that was received, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* will ask departments to include in the case statement an explanation of what their process was for obtaining advisee/mentee feedback.
- Context for Candidate's Efforts: To help calibrate the candidate's contributions, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* will ask departments to indicate in the case statement how the candidate's advising and mentoring responsibilities compare to others in the department or field.
- Discussion of how departments have mentored each tenure-track candidate in preparation for their promotion reviews will be systematically incorporated into the annual spring meetings when department chairs meet with the deans to discuss each departmental colleague's faculty activity reports.

6. Service/citizenship: Departments should clearly define expectations for what tenure-track faculty should aim to achieve in the realm of service/citizenship and include the following in case statements (for associate reviews and tenure reviews): a) a discussion of the guidance they gave the candidate in developing as a citizen, b) an indication of how the candidate's service load compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions, and c) a discussion of the candidate's impact in this realm.

### III. CHANGES TO TENURE REVIEWS

#### A. External Letters in Tenure Reviews

1. Number of required letters: The minimum number of required external letters in tenure reviews will be changed from "12 to 15" to ten. These ten letters need to be "arm's length." The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* will provide guidance on what constitutes "arm's length."

2. "Internal External" Letters: In addition to the ten required arm's-length letters, the review committee will have the option of soliciting up to two "internal external" letters (i.e., from tenured faculty who are from other FAS departments, centers, or other Harvard Schools). This allows the review committee to hear from non-departmental people who may have valuable insights into the candidate. It also parallels the use

of disciplinary experts at the *ad hoc* stage, which aids the FAS's effort to align review stages. Internal external letter writers cannot later serve on the *ad hoc* committee. The template for soliciting external letters will be adjusted to include language that can be used when the recipient is an "internal external" evaluator.

3. Letter Writers in Different Fields: If necessary for certain interdisciplinary candidates, departments will be allowed to solicit letter writers in multiple fields to ensure an informed assessment of the candidate's work. In such cases, it would be expected that there would be more than ten arm's-length letters. Conversations with the candidate should occur at or before the associate review stage to gauge whether their work is interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary and will likely require this wide range of evaluators.

4. Comparand Lists in Tenure Reviews:

- Rank: It remains a requirement that all scholars on the comparand list must be tenured and that there must be "at least two full professors" on the comparand list. As before, non-academic comparands (e.g., artists or people from industry, etc.) are also allowed, as appropriate.
- Comparand Exercise: The comparand exercise will be more clearly explained in the template used to solicit letters from external letter writers. It is a benchmarking exercise and is meant to shed light on the candidate's future trajectory as well as their present standing. The FAS is especially interested in an assessment of the impact of the candidate's work. In addition, the template will make clear that letter writers can substitute more appropriate comparands if they wish.
- Comparands in Interdisciplinary Cases: In those interdisciplinary cases where the department writes to scholars in multiple fields, the same comparand list should be sent to all recipients, and the letter writer can substitute more appropriate comparands if necessary.

5. Clarifying the Task: In rare cases where the candidate's work is especially complex (e.g., at the convergence of several subfields) and where the comparand list may likewise be complex, the review committee will be allowed to add a brief sentence or two to the letter soliciting external (or "internal external") evaluations, more clearly explaining what aspect(s) of the candidate's work the committee would like to hear about. Adding such language to the solicitation letter will be subject to divisional dean/SEAS dean approval.

6. External Evaluations by Phone: On an exceptional basis subject to divisional dean/SEAS dean approval, and only in rare instances where it is essential that the review committee hears from someone who is unable to provide their evaluation in a written letter, the review committee may gather that person's evaluation by phone. To guard against inequities in how these conversations are conducted and recorded, the review committee chair will conduct the conversation following a script of questions that is first reviewed and approved by the divisional/SEAS office, and the divisional assistant dean will take notes. These notes will be included in the dossier.

7. Asking external letters writers to serve on *ad hocs*: Departments should write to all external scholars whom they believe would be helpful to hear from and not "hold back" scholars for the *ad hoc*. Scholars who are invited to write letters but do not do so may be asked to sit on *ad hoc* committees.

## **B. Internal Letters in Tenure Reviews**



1. Robust Departmental Discussions: In keeping with TTRC's recommendation, the FAS encourages departments to foster robust cultures of discussion, where colleagues can candidly debate the strengths and weaknesses of promotion cases, voice and hear others' concerns, and have the opportunity to address doubts or misconceptions.
2. Online Form: An online form will be created to help tenured faculty provide more complete information in the confidential internal letters that they send to the FAS dean in tenure reviews. Readership of internal letters remains unchanged (i.e., these letters will continue to be read by the FAS dean, CAP, and *ad hoc* committee members). The online form will make this readership clear.

#### **IV. CAP AND THE AD HOC**

##### **A. Feedback from CAP and Ad Hoc Meetings**

To increase transparency concerning deliberations at CAP and the *ad hoc*, the following steps will take place:

1. After CAP: After CAP has met and made its recommendation to the president in a tenure review case, the divisional dean/SEAS dean will provide high-level feedback to the department chair, outlining which aspects of the case looked strong and less strong. This can provide insight into CAP's thinking and may also prepare the department chair for possible outcomes.
2. After the Ad Hoc: After the *ad hoc* committee has met and the president has reached his decision, the FAS dean will contact the department chair to offer feedback that may aid the department in preparing for future reviews.
3. Feedback to the Candidate After a Successful Review: Following a successful tenure review, the divisional dean/SEAS dean will meet with the faculty member to congratulate the faculty member and share feedback from the review process. Among other things, the insights gained during the review process can help the dean and faculty member to think together about ways that the newly tenured faculty member can best contribute to Harvard's mission.