

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: When do I have the right to ask to be considered for promotion to full professor?

A: Technically, anytime after tenure you think you are ready. Unlike promotion to associate professor, the timing for the move is flexible. Although some understand that the customary practice is to apply for consideration six years post tenure, there is no schedule that fits all and readiness is key.

Our current Provost writes on this topic in his annual letter: “It cannot be said too often or too emphatically that there is no minimum time between tenure and promotion to professor. We have approved promotions to professor as soon as a year or two after the award of tenure. If the case merits promotion, it should be brought forward without any consideration of an arbitrary timeline. In particular, the notion that promotion occurs no sooner than six years after tenure is entirely fictitious, with no basis in policy.”

Q: What are the standards and criteria for this review?

A: Standards and criteria can be found in the Academic Personnel Policy (aka “Redbook”) in Sections 4 and 6, specific language of which is included elsewhere in this packet. Basically they state that high standards must be the basis for all personnel reviews and that recommendations are to be made only after a full review of the candidate’s contributions in the three areas of teaching, research and service. They further state that all three areas must be considered but that the relevant weight to be given to each may be determined in light of the duties of the faculty member ([please read the Provost’s recent memo on this, “Thoughts on Promotion to Professor” included in this packet](#)). Specific to promotion to full, a faculty member must also show a “record of achievement sufficient to have gained substantial recognition on and off campus from scholars or professionals in his or her field; and must show significant potential for continuing professional achievement.”

Q: When should I have a conversation about coming up for promotion to full professor?

A: We suggest having conversations with your chair and trusted colleagues on a regular basis after you are tenured to check in on your progress. Find out what the standards are in your college and get elected to your PC during a year when you know a promotion case will be going forward. This allows you to see first-hand how your department evaluates a candidate for this promotion. Once you feel you are ready to come up, talk to your chair and ask others to look at your CV as well. Should you decide to go forward, you should talk about the process going forward, ideally in the spring semester prior to the review year.

Q: What if I don’t get the “green light” from my chair/colleagues but I still feel that I am ready to come up for promotion?

A: Come to MSP and talk with us about this! We have counseled many faculty members on this very topic. The advice you are receiving from your department may in fact be appropriate given your progress but the reality is sometimes a faculty member may not have support for reasons that have nothing to do with whether or not you are ready. It’s

important to talk with us when you feel this may be the case and to realize that you can move ahead with the review even if your department is urging you to wait.

Q: How is this review different from tenure?

A: The standards are different (see Section 4.6 of the Redbook) and there is no requirement that you show convincing evidence of excellence in at least two, and strength in the third, of the three areas of teaching, research and service. Furthermore, only tenure cases need to go to the Board of Trustees for approval. In promotion to full, the decision resides with the Provost. Finally and perhaps most important, this is not an up or out review. If you are not successful the first time you come up for promotion to full professor, you can be reviewed again.

Q: What do you do if you receive a recommendation letter that is negative or includes misinformation or items you disagree with?

A: The first thing you do is call (545-2206) or email (mssp@umass.edu) MSP. We will be happy to look over any recommendation letter and talk with you about an appropriate response (if warranted). You do have the absolute right to respond to any recommendation letter or decision concerning your review and have it added to your file going forward. APWS builds in 5 days for you to upload a response should you wish to do so. MSP is happy to not only advise and help construct your response but we can also request that the process be delayed if necessary to allow time for your comments to be added before the next level begins its review.

Q: What other rights do I have with regard to this review?

A: In addition to the rights articulated in Section 5.1 of the Redbook, you also have the right to:

- see a copy of the letter to be sent to outside reviewers BEFORE it goes out.
- see the list of proposed referees so you have an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness of each person before a letter is solicited.
- have access to all materials in your basic file (with the exception of letters you may have waived your right to see) upon request at any point following the DPC recommendation.
- see and receive a copy of all materials added to your file when they are added so you have the opportunity to respond to its substance and appropriateness.
- a decision from the Provost within 45 calendar days of receipt or the deadline for receipt (whichever is later) of both the basic file with all relevant recommendation letters and all additional information or clarifications requested.