Policies and Procedures with Regard to the Evaluation Process Itself

I. Effectiveness in teaching.

As an undergraduate liberal arts university, Ohio Wesleyan places the greatest emphasis upon effectiveness in teaching. Teaching has traditionally been weighted as 60% of the overall evaluation, and in personnel decisions requiring comparison (i.e., promotion and merit), committee members are asked to assign points up to a maximum of 60 to each faculty member eligible in that category. (These scores serve only to initiate discussion, not to conclude it.) The committee recognizes the existence of diverse paths toward effective teaching, even within a discipline, and takes pains to evaluate teaching effectiveness drawing on several independent sources from different constituencies. In addition to standardized course evaluations, the committee solicits peer evaluations and evaluations from the student boards to give it the broadest possible overview of a faculty member’s contribution to fulfilling Ohio Wesleyan’s teaching mission.

General criteria applied to Category I work. The questions which appear in the Self-Report and on the course evaluation form indicate the committee’s criteria for effective teaching. They cover issues raised by the committee in discussion and by the Provost during annual counseling sessions (see p. 8):

1) Subject matter expertise.
2) Preparation for teaching, including course design and organization and class preparation and planning.
3) Teaching effectiveness in the classroom, including classroom management skills and dynamics, as well as issues of rigor and fairness.
4) Teaching effectiveness outside the classroom, including approachability and accessibility.
5) Quality of advising.
6) Ability to accommodate a variety of learning styles and abilities, as indicated by effectiveness with both majors and non-majors, upper- and lower-level students, and well-prepared and less-well-prepared students.
7) Other evidence of teaching engagement, such as direction of independent studies and honors projects, directed readings, and honors tutorials; major revisions of courses and innovations in approach and technique; effective incorporation of technology in teaching; and involvement of students in research and other professional activities.

**Additional considerations in assessing Category I work.** Additionally, the following are some of the committee’s guiding principles for assessment in Category I.

1. Evaluations are most credible when they depend upon direct experience or observation, as course evaluations do. In peer evaluations, the committee always considers the basis for an evaluator’s judgment, and gives less weight to comments for which no evidence is provided. Similarly, in student board evaluations, the committee looks for supporting evidence. Individual departments and individual student boards have different means for gathering information. However, recently the committee has begun explicitly encouraging faculty, especially those faculty on probationary contracts, to share course materials with departmental colleagues and invite their colleagues to observe their classes.

2. The committee recognizes that few faculty members will succeed with every student, and that most faculty members are more effective with some students than with others. The student board often provides the committee with a broader perspective than do the students in a given course, especially if many students take the course to meet distribution requirements. Nevertheless, the university is committed to the academic development of all students it has admitted, so the committee looks for teaching success across a range of students, from beginning to advanced, and will often advise a faculty member to make some effort to increase her or his range.
3. Because OWU is a teaching institution, the committee expects a faculty member’s commitment to teaching to translate into an established campus presence. Regular office hours constitute one means to demonstrate accessibility to students. A pattern of student complaints regarding faculty accessibility is a sufficient cause for a negative personnel decision. Similarly, a pattern of class cancellations or excessive tardiness to class indicates that a faculty member does not adequately respect his or her students or fulfill his or her teaching responsibilities.

II. Scholarly contributions as evidenced through research, publication and professional participation.

Until and unless the faculty decides differently, FPC assumes that the traditional weighting of scholarly and creative work reflects the faculty’s commitment to this work as a part of our mission as an educational institution. Scholarly and creative work have traditionally been weighted as 30% of the overall evaluation, and in personnel decisions requiring comparison (i.e., promotion and merit), committee members are asked to assign points up to a maximum of 30 to each faculty member eligible in that category. (As is the case for Category I, these scores serve only to initiate discussion, not to conclude it.)

The significance of scholarly and creative work. The research and creative work of OWU faculty members not only support our teaching by generating and enhancing classroom content, but they model the kinds of activities in which we wish our students to engage. This work also reflects the quality of our faculty, thus enhancing the university’s reputation in the world at large. If we truly hope to see our students embrace scholarly research and artistic creation with enthusiasm, we need to demonstrate our own enthusiasm for these endeavors, and our continued engagement with the kinds of problem-solving and scholarship that we ask our students to do. Just as we want to be perceived as a community of lifelong learners, we want to be perceived as a community of people engaged in ongoing discussions and explorations that encompass the world outside of Ohio Wesleyan. We aspire to be not merely reporters but activists. Moreover, the reputation that this kind of work enhances brings us more students, and more of the kinds of students that we all want to teach.
As the numerical breakdown of personnel evaluation attests, we continue to consider actual classroom teaching to be twice as important as scholarship. Hence it is impossible to become tenured at Ohio Wesleyan without demonstrating skill in the classroom, and happily, that skill rarely diminishes over time. If anything, experience typically enhances classroom performance. Scholarly and creative productivity, on the other hand, have a greater tendency to fluctuate. Some of these fluctuations mark life changes, increased activity in the area of service, or simply periods of reflection and rejuvenation. Others mark loss of interest in scholarship and creative work. The practical consequences of these shifts in a faculty of strong teachers are seen in those areas of evaluation which require comparison and competition, namely, promotion and merit. Diminution in scholarly activity can thus delay promotion and weaken a faculty member’s competitiveness for merit.

**The committee’s expectations with regard to untenured faculty.** New faculty may be especially anxious regarding their evaluation in Category II. The committee understands, however, the challenges of teaching new courses during a period of adjustment to a new institution, and tends to emphasize the development of teaching in the early years of the probationary period, as long as there is sufficient evidence of potential for growth in Category II. As the tenure decision nears, however, the committee will expect significant production in Category II.

**General criteria applied to Category II work.** As in Category I, the Self-Report form indicates the committee’s criteria in assessing effective scholarship or creative work. They cover issues raised by the committee in discussion and by the Provost during annual counseling sessions (see p. 8):

1) Evidence of engagement with the discipline at a professional level.
2) Evidence of an ongoing OWU research or creative agenda.
3) Evidence of productivity, including articles in refereed journals; published books, plays, or compositions; exhibitions or performances; papers presented at professional meetings; service to a professional organization in the form of offices
held or meetings or sessions organized or chaired; professional contributions to performances or concerts; and attendance at professional meetings.

Additional considerations in assessing Category II work. It is difficult to make a statement that covers all disciplines, and to a large extent FPC relies upon the judgment of peer raters in the relevant field. However, some basic principles can be summarized.

1. The committee is looking for evidence of scholarly or creative engagement, although it does not require any one type of accomplishment for either tenure or promotion but rather looks holistically at a faculty member’s record in this category. Publication, performance, and exhibition obviously constitute reliable evidence of a type often privileged by peers and committee members. But conference papers, panel discussions, invited workshop presentations, Web publications, and service as a conference organizer, evaluator of papers or manuscripts, or contest judge can also demonstrate engagement with an appropriate community outside of Ohio Wesleyan. It is not uncommon for peer evaluators and committee members to look for this latter type of activity as evidence that projects described in a Self-Report are actually underway.

2. In many fields, a faculty member’s first publications, exhibitions, or performances are related to graduate work, and often, to a thesis or dissertation. Eventually, though, the committee hopes to see evidence of ongoing work done at Ohio Wesleyan or during a faculty member’s time here. A dissertation or other culminating demonstration of a degree candidate’s progress is intended to launch a career, not end it, and the committee is looking for evidence that a faculty member continues to be engaged in scholarship or creative production and has brought some of her or his work to fruition.

3. The committee harbors no prejudices against co-authorship or collaboration. The committee relies upon Self-Reports to clarify a faculty member’s contribution to collaborative work, and upon peer evaluators to assess the relative merits of co-authored or collaborative work. In some fields, the appearance of a name first among co-authors or collaborators signifies the greatest contribution to the final product, while in others it does not.

4. Other things being equal, the committee favors quality over quantity. For example, publication in a peer-reviewed journal is favored over other kinds of publication, since peer-reviewed publication often entails a lengthier process of review, revision, and resubmission.
Peer evaluators are expected to provide comments to help the committee judge the quality of Category II work.

5. Generally speaking, except in the field of education, the committee has tended to favor disciplinary scholarship or comparable artistic productions to work on teaching and learning.

6. The committee tends to look favorably on scholarly or creative work that involves students as co-investigators, co-creators, or co-authors.

7. It is the practice of the committee to rely upon peer evaluators on campus to help it assess the Category II work of faculty. However, although it has not been our recent practice, if a faculty member believes that her or his achievements in Category II cannot be adequately judged by peers on campus, then she or he should apprise the committee of this situation and ask permission to have the Category II work evaluated by one or more persons off campus.

8. In evaluating faculty members for promotion in particular, the committee has recognized the usefulness of looking at a candidate’s overall record, or, in the case of promotion to full professor, that part of the record that has accumulated since the previous promotion. To that end, the committee requests curriculum vitae of all candidates for promotion.

9. At times, the lines between Category II work and work in the other categories may not be clear. The committee reserves the right to decide where a given contribution belongs, but is open to persuasive arguments made in the Self-Report or by peer evaluators. A faculty member who is undecided should make a judgment call, and be assured that the committee may categorize the work more advantageously than she or he does.

10. The committee recognizes that a faculty member’s scholarly and creative interests can shift over time. In the interest of promoting sustained intellectual and artistic engagement in our faculty, the committee maintains a certain amount of flexibility regarding what constitutes appropriate Category II activity.

III. **Service to the University and community based on professional qualifications.**

Service activities are an important component of a faculty member’s responsibilities. Service activities support the faculty governance system, enhance the co-curriculum, and contribute to the university’s role in the wider community. Service has traditionally been weighted as 10% in the overall evaluation, and in personnel decisions requiring comparison (i.e.,
promotion and merit), committee members are asked to assign points up to a maximum of 10 to each faculty member eligible in that category. (As with the other categories, these scores serve only to initiate discussion, not to conclude it.) The following considerations guide FPC’s evaluation in Category III.

1. In general, the committee favors campus service over off-campus service. While both kinds are valuable, the first supports most directly the administration of the university and the enhancement of the co-curriculum. In particular, FPC favors service on standing committees because our system of faculty governance relies heavily on the work that these committees do. FPC recognizes, however, that the elective process results in a limited number of successful candidates, and welcomes evidence of willingness to serve.

2. In terms of community service, the committee makes an attempt to evaluate the extent and quality of work involved. Charitable contributions that are strictly monetary do not count as service.

3. With regard to any activity for which a faculty member is compensated, the committee takes into account this compensation in assessing the extent of service involved.

4. While committee members adhere to the 10% weighting in their initial assessments, in the final analysis this category may weigh more heavily in the making of merit decisions. The committee recognizes that individuals may shift their priorities over time, and that these shifts most frequently affect the relative amounts of time devoted to Categories II and III. Someone who has demonstrated strength in teaching and engaged in exceptional institutional service may well be rewarded with merit.

**Policies and Practices with Regard to Communication of the Committee’s Evaluation**

The Provost serves as the Faculty Personnel Committee’s spokesperson to individual faculty members. The Provost communicates personnel decisions to faculty members by two means.

1. **Counseling Letters**: For tenure-track faculty on probationary appointment, the Provost conveys in writing a summary of the findings of the FPC. A copy is sent to the department chair. These letters cover the committee’s evaluations in each of the three categories.
2. Counseling Sessions: After the tenure-track faculty member on probationary appointment has received the written summary of the FPC’s findings, the Provost meets with that faculty member, accompanied by the chair of his or her department, to discuss the findings of the committee as presented in the counseling letter. During the counseling session the probationary faculty member has the opportunity to ask for clarification, offer comments or observations, ask for advice, and seek further information that might be relevant to his or her performance as a faculty member.

During the counseling session the Provost and the chair might make comments that interpret, supplement, or go beyond the written summary of the FPC’s findings. All involved should clearly differentiate any administrative or personal observations or suggestions from those representing the committee’s views. Probationary faculty should keep in mind that only the FPC findings as explicitly stated in the written account of those findings are directly and ineluctably relevant to future personnel committee recommendations regarding retention, merit, promotion, and tenure.

The Provost may bring back to the committee questions raised and information gleaned during the counseling sessions, for the committee’s cognizance or response.