

**COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL (CAP)  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)**

Revised November 1, 2008

**16. What does CAP look for in a mid-career appraisal?**

The purpose of the mid-career appraisal is to inform an assistant professor in a thorough and formal way about her or his prospects for tenure on the basis of the accomplishment so far. It is a crucial document and one of the most effective instruments in the UC personnel system.

The mid-career appraisal thus serves a very different function from the departmental letter for a merit increase and should not simply re-state the case made for a merit increase.

Of utmost importance are rigorous evaluation and complete candor. If there are weaknesses in the candidate's career to date, a department's natural reluctance to cause pain can do much more harm than good to the candidate and the university. CAP very often rejects mid-career appraisals that withhold severe judgment out of a misguided sense of kindness.

The most common weakness in an assistant professor's early career is a lack of strenuous effort toward research publication. The University of California is a research university, and provides generous resources and time for research. A relatively thin publication record (or its equivalent in the arts) cannot be lightly passed over.

Fields vary in their expectations for tenure, and mid-career appraisals reflect this. In general, however, positive mid-career accomplishments show evidence of research independent from doctoral work, of research projects that promise leadership in the field, and peer-reviewed evidence that research will continue once tenure is granted. In the sciences, the award of grants for research is a prominent piece of evidence that the research program is valid, although grants do not in themselves substitute for lack of published scholarship.

Letters from outside referees are not required for a mid-career appraisal, but can be included at the option of the department.