

CAP's Notes on Evaluation Procedures

The evaluative procedures used by the Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) are summarized in a series of questions and answers in the “CAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)” posted on this website. The “CAP Notes on Evaluation Procedures” contains much of the same information in a less detailed, narrative format. The reviews and recommendations of CAP are central to the process by which faculty are appointed, advanced within rank, and promoted. In conducting its evaluative reviews, CAP seeks to apply a campus-wide standard, which is refined by the vast number of cases that it reviews. It bears the joint responsibility of maintaining the academic standards of the campus and of seeking to improve the quality and efficiency of the review process.

The notion of campus-wide standards may not be wholly obvious to reviewers at levels prior to CAP. In addition, members of CAP have observed that the academic personnel review process on campus has been insufficiently transparent and insufficiently self-correcting for quality and efficiency. Hence, this document is intended to communicate some key issues regarding how CAP evaluates files, as practiced over the last several years.

CAP evaluates the file presented to it, not the individual or the individual's field, and it does so without the depth of knowledge that departmental colleagues have of their field and of each other's work. CAP's evaluations are made in regard to the specific personnel action being requested. Therefore, the file needs to illuminate adequately the record of the candidate and be prepared in accord with the proposed action. These points are often not fully understood at prior levels of review. This is reflected both in straightforward cases coming to CAP with excessive review at the departmental level, as well as in problematic cases being insufficiently evaluated or documented.

CAP's evaluation is based on two categories of information in dossiers forwarded to them by the Office of Academic Personnel. The first is the candidate's report of his or her activities in the Addendum to the Biography (UCI-AP-10), together with teaching evaluations. The second is the series of assessments of a faculty member's activities and achievements by his or her department, by the department chair, by the dean of the school, and, for appointments, major accelerations, and promotions, by outside evaluators. Because CAP encounters considerable variability among faculty and departments in the presentation and evaluation of these assessments, we comment on these two categories separately below, with suggestions intended to improve the uniformity of files and the fairness and transparency of the process.

Individual files are subject to discussion and debate in the Council, with a majority prevailing in any given action. CAP applies its best judgment regarding the candidate's scholarship, teaching, and service during the review period and regarding the rank and step to which candidates belong at given stages in their careers based on the evidence in the file.

Normally, promotions are made to Step I of the next higher rank. A salary increase always accompanies this; if needed, it is achieved by off-step status. If a higher step of the next rank is recommended (e.g. Associate Professor V to Full Professor II), the academic unit should justify the proposed action. Please refer to the comments on “overlapping steps” in the CAP FAQs #12.

I. The Addendum to the Biography. (replaced in 2008 with the “Review Profile” in some departments)

Faculty *vitae* have considerable variability in style and format, and such individuality should be preserved. The purpose of the Addendum/Review Profile is to convey clearly the information needed for reviewers to evaluate the proposed action. The Addendum acquired a consistent format some years ago in the interests of achieving consistency among Departments and Schools, with a flexibility that accommodated different fields of scholarly and creative endeavor. The Review Profile was established in 2008 with the development of the myData online faculty databank.

A. Teaching

CAP finds evaluations of teaching performance most useful if standardized student evaluations are put into perspective by faculty colleagues. Evaluations drawn from student performance, teaching materials, and in-class peer evaluations are appropriate. In the case of Lecturers, CAP finds student evaluations alone to be inadequate. Reports of classroom visits by regular faculty are particularly helpful in evaluating the quality of Lecturers’ teaching.

B. Publications

Except for promotions, CAP attends, almost exclusively, to work that has been produced in the review period. That is, its evaluation is based on work in the file that has been done since the last review. It puts weight on scholarly work that has been published or formally accepted for publication and evaluated by the Department and on creative work that is new and has been presented in a professional, public venue and evaluated by the Department. When the Department has made a good case for including them, other items will receive consideration as "research and creative activity," such as when substantial portions of a book not yet published have been produced. Section II C of the Addendum is reserved for completed portions of major works that cannot reasonably be expected to be completed in one review period. Such completed portions of larger works must be evaluated in the file if they are to be considered by CAP; external reviews may be appropriate in some cases. Please refer to the CAP FAQs on "works in progress" (FAQ #30).

Most centrally, the categories below constitute the main forms of scholarly work, and comments are given to clarify points associated with their evaluation as file elements.

1. **Articles.** Except for promotions to the next higher rank, CAP generally confines its review to scholarly articles or creative writing that have appeared in print or that have been accepted definitively for publication ("in press"). It flatly disallows work that has been submitted for a previous merit review that received a positive action. It does not give weight to journal manuscripts “submitted for publication,” “in preparation,” or otherwise articles-in-progress, although the Department letter may analyze such work to document the creative potential of the candidate.

These excluded categories are often misclassified as valid for consideration on the Addendum, and work previously submitted as “in press” is sometimes listed as new work in the next merit action. These errors occasion substantial extra work for CAP members as they sort through the publication record.

It is particularly helpful when the publication venues are characterized with regard to their academic standing. When work has been published in an outlet that is not a top-tier journal, the case for the merit of the work can be made in the Departmental analysis. In fields where policy publications are an important form of scholarly activity, policy venues should also be characterized with regard to their standing in terms of venue, selectivity, research or creative content, and peer review status. The quality and impact of the work is always of paramount significance, balanced by the expected quantity appropriate to the academic field. The length of the analysis of the work in the file should be appropriately calibrated to the action being requested.

Clinical research is evaluated with criteria similar to that used for evaluation of bench research. Research that is performed to answer an important question and subsequently answers that question in a convincing fashion is usually regarded by CAP as the most valuable. Typically, CAP gives less weight to research that simply describes an unusual observation (e.g., case reports), however, the provision of new and important insights will increase the scholarship merit of such publications. Studies that are primarily designed to evaluate the efficacy and safety of drugs are given less weight, particularly if these studies are initiated by pharmaceutical companies.

Opinion papers and reviews often indicate the standing of the candidate in the profession and usually do not have the status of research publications. In some fields, research reviews are a major form of scholarship. CAP’s assessment of the scholarship value of such work will be greatly assisted by careful and critical Departmental evaluation.

2. **Books.** In most non-science fields, books are the most significant form of publication. Because they appear less frequently than articles, Schools generally wish to give weight to such work during its preparation. CAP recognizes and accepts this intention but credits only finished chapters, evaluated thoroughly by Departments. Once submitted, these items - even if further revised - cannot be counted toward another merit action, unless they are part of a finished, accepted book. At promotions, however, all material since the last promotion is counted.

The publication status of a book is a recurrent issue. When a book has been published, its status is clear, although CAP does look for reviews of the book or other evaluations of its impact. As with journal articles, it is good to have the file characterize the stature of the publishing house pertinent to the candidate's field. Book manuscripts that are formally in production or complete and finally accepted for publication by a publishing house are considered by CAP as “published.” This can be established by a letter from the publisher designating this. A “provisional contract” is generally not sufficient evidence that a book is completed; provisional contracts can be granted before the completion or even submission of the manuscript.

CAP expects that articles, in addition to books, will be an important part of the record at any promotion. This is particularly the case with promotions to tenure, where work subsequent to

and independent of dissertation work is expected. In general, recommendations for promotion (especially to tenure) cannot be made solely on the basis of a book manuscript that is not at the stage of final acceptance by the press. The past has seen more than a few non-finalized works stall or fail after they have been used to support a positive tenure decision.

3. **Chapters, Conference Proceedings.** In some scientific fields, these have less weight than articles and books, especially if they do not represent original research or are not peer reviewed. Some fields, however, consider conference proceedings or chapters in edited volumes a major form of peer-reviewed publication, and Departments may wish to make this point in a detailed, blanket justification. Book chapters that are contributions to edited volumes can vary in their scholarly value and level of peer review; hence it is pivotal for the Department to critically evaluate such work.

4. **Editions and Edited Volumes; Scholarly Editions of Texts or of Music Scores.** CAP considers edited volumes or editing journal issues as professional activity, unless the Department argues strongly for the scholarly value of the effort. The editors' substantive contributions in such volumes or issues are of course valid as chapters or articles. Scholarly/critical editions of texts and music scores can be considered a major or a minor research product, depending on the number and difficulty of the sources collated and the nature of the accompanying commentary and scholarly apparatus. Again, Departmental documentation and analysis will greatly benefit CAP's review of such material.

5. **Textbooks.** CAP treats these as “teaching activity” rather than scholarly activity, unless the Department argues analytically for a textbook’s patent contribution to research in the field.

6. **Other.** CAP considers translations of the candidate’s previously published work, re-issues (e.g., in readers or anthologies), and re-printings of work submitted in previous review periods as evidence of professional competence, activity, and impact. Such items are not considered new research, even when they are updated and revised. Conventionally these are listed with candidates’ original publications on C.V.s.

C. Creative Activity

As with scholarly essays, peer-reviewed journal articles, and books, CAP generally confines its review to new products of creative activity that have appeared in public exhibitions or performances, or in print, film, and digital formats (e.g., CD, video or DVD recordings and presentations on the World-Wide Web). It also considers work definitively accepted for publication or public presentation as valid for review. It does not generally give weight to incomplete work under commission, under advance contract, submitted for review, or in preparation.

Depending upon the field of creative activity, CAP gives weight to both peer-reviewed and invited engagements with the most weight given to professional performance, exhibition and publication venues. Because many creative projects are self-generated, may lack institutionalized channels for presentation, and may receive only journalistic criticism, CAP welcomes competent peer evaluation beyond that of the department, even in merit reviews where outside letters of evaluation are not required. As it does with publications, CAP welcomes

assessments of the professional standings of the various venues of performance, exhibition and publication pertinent to a candidate's creative activities.

Only in the case of promotions to the next higher rank does CAP count portions of any work-in-progress that have been submitted for merit increases in previous review periods. Departments may wish to comment on major projects in progress in the departmental letter, if wanting to draw attention to a candidate's creative activities. In merit actions, CAP gives weight only to substantive portions of work-in-progress that are critically evaluated by the department, such as movements or scenes from a musical or dramatic work, or a portfolio of production materials or designs. Portions so submitted may later be resubmitted only as part of a finished work or in promotion files. See CAP FAQs #30 on "works in progress" and Section II C of the Addendum.

CAP considers work completed, performed or exhibited in previous review periods, such as re-stagings, post-premiere performances, solo or group exhibitions of visual art, video or film, and the like, as evidence of professional recognition and activity, not as new creative activity. CAP normally considers articles about the candidate, interviews, and reviews of a candidate's work as "Professional recognition" and not under the rubric of "Publications."

II. Evaluative letters

The purpose of letters from the Department, Chair, Dean and, if appropriate, external reviewers, is to provide independent evaluation of the candidate's accomplishments pertinent to the proposed action. The emphasis here is on evaluation, not endorsement. What CAP values in letters are thoughtful assessments of the person's work and its impact on the field. Letters that squarely address problematic issues raised by the record, by other levels of review, and particularly outside letters, have greater authenticity and are accordingly most valuable. Letters that simply recount what is in the basic file are of little use. Please also refer to CAP FAQs #33-37.

A. Outside letters

Outside letters are required for promotion files. For significant accelerations within rank, the department may feel they will be valuable to support the case. Attention to the following points greatly strengthens the value of outside letters, and solicitations that request specific comments are often the most helpful.

1. Echoing the statement above, analytical letters that cite specific achievements, their originality, and their influence on the perspectives and methods of the field carry much more weight than descriptions of the candidate's activity and general praise, however enthusiastic.
2. References from disinterested parties (usually chosen by the department) are given greater weight. References suggested by the candidate, however, can be quite valuable if they are analytical.
3. References from other UC campuses are vital for actions peculiar to the UC system. These include advancement to Professor, Step VI, and accelerations within rank. The recommender should know the action contemplated and be asked to comment on it specifically.

4. CAP expects comments in evaluators' letters stating their relationship to the candidate, if such relationship exists. Departments should ask for such comments below the signature line if the evaluator wishes to remain anonymous.
5. While it is impossible to specify the number of letters required for a given action, five to eight analytical letters are generally adequate for most actions. CAP is influenced by the substance of the letters and not by the numerical proportion of positive recommendations.

B. Departmental letter

Departments, after voting to advance or promote a candidate, may naturally advocate the action in terms that tend to mute obvious shortcomings or problematic comments in outside letters. These elements should be dealt with straightforwardly; they are rarely fatal, and discussing them gives authenticity to the Department's analysis. One-sided advocacy and a lack of analytical weighing of the evidence guarantees that CAP itself will have to do this and may do so with skepticism about the Department's judgment.

Departments should minimize quotes from outside letters to make its case, as those letters are read carefully by CAP. Comments from the Department, arising from the faculty discussion on the proposed actions and on specific items in the file are the most valuable. Accelerations within rank and accelerated promotions require evidence of (a) extraordinary research and scholarship or creative activity and (b) excellence in teaching and/or service (see CAP FAQs #10).

Accelerations are more likely when clearly justified in an explicit vote of the faculty and the letters from the Department, chair and dean. Outside UC letters commenting on acceleration may be helpful but are not essential for most accelerations within rank, even for those over two years.

A Career Equity Review, which is distinct from an acceleration, may be sought to correct the status of faculty undervalued at present rank (see CAP FAQs#18).

C. Chairs' and Deans' letters

CAP values comments, even if brief, on the strong and weak points of a file, with a considered judgment about the proposed action. In cases in which a chair or dean has expertise, independent scholarly evaluation is desirable. The letter may usefully include comments comparing the action at hand with other personnel actions in the department or school as long as other faculty are not explicitly named. The Chair's and Dean's letters represent a second and third level of review, having a detachment and a broader view that Departments may naturally lack. Simple endorsements on merit cases are appropriate, if the Departmental letter is sufficiently analytical and informative. When a chair or dean has been a collaborator of the candidate within the past four years, CAP prefers that a senior member of the department or school who has not been a collaborator provide the Chair's or School-level assessment.

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