

Department Evaluation Committee Guidelines
The English Department at Central Connecticut State University
Fall 2008 (Version 2.2)

In accordance with Article 4.11.9 of the 2007-2011 CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, the English Department values the work of each of its members in the four contractual categories: Load Credit Activity; Creative Activity; Service to the department, university, and community; and Professional Activity. These departmental guidelines have been created in accordance with Section II of the “Promotion and Tenure Policy for Tenure-track Teaching Faculty” adopted by the Central Connecticut State University Faculty Senate on October 22, 2007.

Mentoring and Observation of New Faculty

All new tenure-track members of the English Department will be assigned mentors who will serve as resources and guides to the department, university, and profession. Members of the Department Evaluation Committee (DEC) will not serve as mentors during their terms.

A member of the DEC or another departmental colleague will observe the teaching of all new tenure-track members on at least three occasions during the probationary period and for a faculty member’s promotion and/or tenure application and offer written feedback to be used at the discretion of the faculty member. At least one visit with written feedback by a DEC member should occur for each sexennial file, as well. Follow-up observations at every stage will be done as necessary and may be requested by any individual faculty member. Observations by the faculty mentor or other non-DEC member, followed by written or oral feedback, are also encouraged, especially in the first three years.

What We Value

Teaching

We as a department (which includes the disparate disciplines of cinema studies, composition, creative writing, English education, journalism, linguistics, literature, and professional writing) respect the broad spectrum of pedagogies – from lecture to the many more recent decentralized models of student-driven, peer-reviewed projects and hands-on learning. This diversity of approach extends to the individual instructor’s choice of whether to use available technology for pedagogical purposes both within and outside the classroom. While the department aims at achieving comparable outcomes in the range of courses offered at the various levels of instruction, each teacher has the right to choose the approaches that best serve the students in a particular class. To better evaluate the specific approaches and outcomes of their own courses faculty members are permitted, and indeed encouraged, to adapt the current departmental course evaluation forms with course-specific questions and emphases.

No matter the pedagogy or student evaluation criteria, all teachers should be organized, clear, and accessible and respectful to students. They should, *inter alia*, present a thorough syllabus to each class at the beginning of a semester; post and hold regularly scheduled office hours; return

graded assignments in a timely fashion; and in general behave in a professional manner. The goal of all teaching activity should be student learning.

Creative Activity

As a department we embrace the intimate and necessary relationship between teaching and creative activity, but at the same time we acknowledge the challenge of producing meaningful work within a teaching-intensive environment. Publishing for the sake of merely getting something into print should never be the goal, but sharing one's work with peers and the public should be the natural outgrowth of a faculty member's teaching and research interests and activities. Given the time required to produce good work, we are more interested in the quality of activity than the quantity.

We value the many outlets for and examples of excellence that our several disciplines boast. Peer-reviewed projects are always to be weighted more, but, given the ever-expanding definition of publication, a variety of print and on-line outlets is also appropriate. It is the responsibility of faculty members to present in their portfolios evidence of the importance and impact of the outlets in which their works appear (e.g., acceptance rates, circulation, roster of contributors, etc.) Because there are so many varieties and possibilities, the list is presented in alphabetical, not hierarchical, order and, by definition, incomplete:

- articles in journals
- articles in newspapers
- articles in larger collections
- books
- chapbooks
- chapters in books
- columns in newspapers and magazines
- conference presentations
- conference proceedings
- consulting
- editing a collection or a journal
- entries in reference works
- free-lance writing projects
- in-progress larger projects (monographs, longer articles)
- lectures (to both professional organizations and the public)
- novels
- poems
- plays
- readings of one's own work (completed or in-process)
- reviews
- Scholarship on Teaching and Learning (SOTL)
- short fiction
- significant accomplishments that may be outside one's obvious area of expertise
- textbooks or handbooks
- unpublished creative projects

Service

In service to the department, university, and community we support the broadest definition of activity. Service includes, but is not limited to, (in alphabetical order):

academic advising
civic engagement
committee (departmental and/or university-wide¹) service
community outreach
event organizing
faculty mentoring
student club advising
student mentoring
et cetera

The key factors in quality are the faculty member's commitment, usefulness, and, in the best of all possible worlds, success. Mere membership in a committee, for example, is never enough. Leadership positions are weighted even more. Evidence of one's service should be clearly documented.

Professional Activity

Professional activity encompasses a variety of endeavors, including, but not limited to, membership and leadership positions in the professional organizations appropriate to the various fields within the department (cinema studies, composition, creative writing, English education, journalism, linguistics, literature, and TESOL). This category also can include a wide array of activities, grounded in the knowledge and skills of the profession, in which the faculty engages on the behalf of public and private organizations and agencies (e.g., *pro bono* writing, teaching, editing, speaking etc.).

¹ The standing departmental committees are: Appointments, Assessment, Composition, Curriculum, DEC, Graduate, Inventory and Budget, Nominations and Elections, Sabbatical Leave, Student Awards, and Website. Other service to the department and University may include, but is not limited to, the regularly elected English representatives for the University Curriculum Committee, University Graduate Studies Committee, and the University Senate.

Appendix

Some Rules of Thumb for Preparing a File

Be clear.

Make your file *show as clearly as possible what you have accomplished* in your teaching, your scholarship, and your service.

For your teaching:

Include a syllabus for each class taught during the period under reviews. If the course has evolved over time, include the different iterations along with explanations of the causes and effects of the revisions.

Can you demonstrate success in your teaching? How?
Course evaluations?

Since the department has not revised its evaluations yet and a standard one has not yet been adopted university-wide, it's important to help the evaluators at all levels glean as much as possible from the present (flawed) ones.

We strongly encourage faculty to generate statistics from the raw data and offer analysis of the results. The Dean expects you will do this, because departments that use bubble-sheet evaluations have the statistical automatically generated.

Don't hide bad evaluations (or group them at the very end); don't dismiss them simply by categorizing the students as poor students or the course as a difficult course. Offer an explanation.

If there's a pattern of poor evaluations, explain what you're doing to address the issues raised by students. No one needs to be perfect, but no one should act as if any criticism is unwarranted or just plain wrong.

Sample assignments, papers or tests?

For creative activity:

For publications, what kind of publication is it?
For books, make clear the nature of the press.

For journals, make clear the type of journal.
Is it refereed?
What's the acceptance rate of submissions?

(A useful source source: MLA Directory of Periodicals on EBSCO Host Research Databases)

For on-line publications, explain the nature of the website.
Is it refereed or open?

For conferences, what kind of conference is it? National? Local?
Does it accept all paper proposals it receives? Most? Some? Few?

For service: What have the committees on which you have served achieved? One or two active committees always beats a list of committee names.

For professional activity: what has your service/leadership accomplished?

Be organized.

Make your file *as simple to navigate as possible*. Organize your file according to the criteria in the contract, and follow the outline provided in the Senate Resolution.

With an eye towards clarifying your portfolio for those who have only the slightest knowledge of your field, explain the significance of your accomplishments in as documented a way as possible. For instance, provide external evidence of the acceptance rate of a journal. If you have published a book, has it been reviewed? Where and by whom? What do these mean? If your book was reviewed by external reviewers for the press, establish their significance for the field. Have your articles been cited by other researchers? (Google Scholar and Google Books can help you with this.)

Make sure you've substantiated any claims you make in your narrative with clear evidence in your supporting documents--otherwise such claims will appear as hearsay. E.g., "Jacques Derrida told me at MLA that he would write a dust jacket blurb for my book."

Make sure that citations in your narrative to supporting documents correspond exactly with your "Inventory of Documents."

Don't double-count items in different contractual categories.

Before submitting, re-read your file as if you know nothing about the discipline. (e.g., "Who's Jacques Derrida?" or "What's O.T.?") Then make sure your file answers whatever questions the uninformed reader might have.

Be brief.

According to past and present representatives of the university-wide P&T at the annual DEC workshop, *brevity is a very good thing*.

Be brief, but thorough, in terms of the

- 1) narrative,
- 2) the materials,
- 3) and anything else, and

the DEC should be brief, but thorough, in its evaluation.

This is key:

Give all the information, as clearly as possible, that is necessary for evaluators to make a fair and honest evaluation. Everything else just gets in the way.