

## CAP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) is an advisory body that represents the Academic Senate in the faculty personnel review process. This committee makes the last recommendation in the course of the review process, after which time the Provost or Vice Provost makes a final decision. These FAQ specifically address issues that CAP repeatedly encounters or that can be sources of confusion. They are not meant to be comprehensive and will be updated periodically.

More comprehensive, detailed Academic Personnel procedures and practices re: Covid 19 are available at: <https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/resources/covid-19-guidance>

APM: University of California Academic Personnel Manual (systemwide policies)  
<https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/academic-personnel-policy/>

MAPP: Academic Personnel Procedures (UCM's application of systemwide policies)  
<https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/policies/merced-academic-personnel-policies-procedures>

STOP THE CLOCK option:

[https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/sites/academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/ucm-ap\\_903\\_stop\\_the\\_clock\\_certification\\_form\\_rev\\_8.17.21.pdf](https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/sites/academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/ucm-ap_903_stop_the_clock_certification_form_rev_8.17.21.pdf)

COVID STOP THE CLOCK provision:

[https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/sites/academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/covid-19\\_stc\\_option.pdf](https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/sites/academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/covid-19_stc_option.pdf)

Per UCM Senate bylaws, CAP makes recommendations to the Chancellor or designee (i.e., Provost or Vice Provost) on appointments, promotions, mid-career assessments, career equity reviews, and other matters involving academic personnel. The final decision rests with the Chancellor or Chancellor's designees (Provost or Vice Provost).

### REVIEW STANDARDS

#### **How will review practices account for the negative impacts of COVID-19?**

CAP has collaborated extensively with the Academic Personnel Office to respond to COVID-19 interruptions to accomplishments through both policy and practice changes, as described in

documents on the COVID-19 web page referenced above. The most up-to-date information is listed on this page. <https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/resources/covid-19-guidance>

### **What are the criteria for acceleration?**

The criteria for a full-step acceleration must be outstanding or extraordinary accomplishments in research, the primary area of review, and a secondary area of review, and clearly excellent work otherwise. For the Professor series, this means high impact, very high quality, transformative research or creative activities beyond the specific disciplinary norms in the period of review, along with noteworthy excellence in teaching and/or service, and no substandard work in any area. A strong research record in number of articles, grants, or books alone, for instance, without significant quality or impact, or with merely adequate teaching and mentoring, or with substandard service should not be considered a strong case for acceleration. Note that for the Professor of Teaching series, any acceleration will be considered only if there are superlative teaching contributions, far above assigned standards, as well as outstanding scholarly productivity or service. As is the case on any UC campus, accelerations are denied more often than granted. Accelerations within the Full Professor series, especially to Above Scale or to/over Step 6) will require particularly high expectations.

CAP will also carefully consider excellence in contributions related to diversity and broad impacts of inclusivity as a criterion for acceleration if all other areas of review are strong. CAP encourages candidates to include their work in inclusive excellence and diversity, where appropriate within their self-statement, and expects to see such contributions highlighted in documents from lower levels of review. CAP expects to see a clear articulation of the work faculty do to promote student and faculty diversity and inclusivity and wants to see evidence of work with broader impacts within the campus community and for society.

### **What are the standards for receiving an Above Scale merit?**

As the highest merit in the review process, Above Scale (Distinguished Professor) merits have a higher standard than a typical merit, but do not require the same exceptional work as Advancement to Above Scale career reviews. Generally, CAP requires evidence of continued significant research output and impact, very good teaching, and ongoing professional and campus service. An Above Scale Merit before the normal four-year review period requires a particularly exceptional file and is rare. See APM 220-18 (b. (4)).

### **What are the standards for a Satisfactory Mandatory Five-Year (Quinquennial) Review?**

Professor Step 5 and above are indefinite steps – faculty can remain in good standing without proceeding further through the step system. However, APM 200 requires that “every faculty member shall be reviewed at least every five years.” In lieu of recommending a merit

advancement at the five-year point, this review can result in a recommendation of either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

To be deemed Satisfactory at an indefinite step, CAP expects to see evidence of contributions in both teaching and research (with effort depending on the faculty member's primary area of emphasis), as well as evidence of meaningful service to the university. Faculty who are doing little to no significant work in one or more categories of review (research, teaching, service) are likely to be judged Unsatisfactory. Faculty who are negatively contributing to the university through substandard teaching or service might also be judged Unsatisfactory, even if they are producing meritorious research.

### **How does CAP view Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) statements?**

CAP values impactful EDI work as a positive contribution to research/creative activity, teaching, and service activities. This could include anti-racist, anti-sexist, or anti-white supremacy efforts; activities that directly work to increase inclusion and success of underrepresented students, staff, or faculty; or the work on programs, policies, or practices that challenge structural inequities. Such work should always be listed in the Bio-bib and highlighted in the self-statement, either within the categories of research, teaching, and service or as a separate section. Descriptions of contributions to EDI should explain and contextualize the substantive nature of the work.

CAP finds EDI statements as less compelling or valuable when they do not involve substantial, proactive work, for instance, teaching a course that happens to have a number of underrepresented students. Interacting with traditionally underrepresented people on a majority minority campus in the course of fulfilling one's duties is generally not evidence of proactive EDI work. For example, statements such as "I wrote a recommendation letter for a woman," "many minorities take my classes," or "I provide clinical care to Asian Americans" do not display convincing efforts at diversity, equity, or inclusive excellence. Likewise, CAP discourages listing the names of under-represented students and postdocs, for instance in one's lab, as evidence of a faculty member's own accomplishments. Faculty should be cautious not to include personal details of others (family or medical history, personal struggles, etc.) in their statements.

In contrast, descriptions of specific activities designed to increase equity, be more inclusive, or explicitly work towards the success of underrepresented community members make for effective statements. EDI statements in review files should reflect efforts and accomplishments rather than personal beliefs or life histories.

## RESEARCH

**UCM has many truly exceptional researchers. Why shouldn't they be rewarded for their research accomplishments, rather than being expected to also do significant teaching and service? Isn't this a poor use of their time?**

Research is the primary area of review in the Professor and corresponding series. However, UCM is a research university, not a research institute. As such, faculty have responsibilities beyond their research, and the university expects a balance of contributions to teaching and service as well as research. Consistent with APM 210, 220, and 285 policy, CAP's view generally is that we review faculty on three required areas: research, teaching, and service.

**When can work in progress be submitted?**

Including a work in progress in the case review file is primarily aimed at faculty in book disciplines as a way to recognize that completing a book manuscript often takes far longer than a single review period. Accordingly, faculty can submit completed chapter(s) from a monograph for a merit review, with the understanding that these chapters, when the book is published, cannot count in a second merit review. In a rank review (for promotion or advancement), all previous materials, including completed parts of larger works submitted for merits at that rank, will be considered. CAP encourages faculty to carefully report when and how they would like published work to be counted.

**How does CAP view grants and outside funding? Can it replace publications as a form of research?**

The awarding of a grant is not itself sufficient for advancement; rather, CAP generally considers a grant to be a promise of future productivity and an indicator of the potential impact of research, especially if the grant is highly competitive. It is an important part of many faculty's research productivity. Still, receiving a grant is not in and of itself sufficient for advancement. Peer-reviewed national grants such as NIH, NSF, NEH, DoD, CEC, Guggenheim, ACLS, Rockefeller, etc., are considered strong indicators of research excellence. In some scientific fields, grant funding or renewal of funding greatly enhances a tenure case or advancement at higher levels, but is not a substitute for peer-reviewed publications, especially for faculty at higher ranks. A lack of funding in a discipline that typically requires grant support for doing research may raise questions about the research effort and quality, as well as the stature of the individual in their field of study.

**How do you evaluate the professional/creative activity requirement for Professors of Teaching? Do Teaching Professors have to do research/creative work? Does it have to be in**

**pedagogy? Are there standards for the published research for the Professors of Teaching series?**

Teaching Professors are expected to produce recognizable work in their area of expertise, such as creative activities, scholarship, professional activities/accomplishments, etc. Like all faculty, Professors of Teaching may choose to do basic, applied, pedagogical, or any other generally accepted form of research in their field (APM 285 9a).

Teaching Professors are not required to engage only in research related to pedagogy per se. Published work within their area of technical specialty is acceptable as well. Scholarly activity in the form of a publication is expected for faculty in the Teaching Professor series (as indicated in APM 210). Quality and impact of the work are important, more than quantity. This said, CAP recognizes that faculty in this series focus primarily on teaching, and thus, have less time to devote to such activities, so our expectations are adjusted accordingly.

**Are external letters necessary when an Assistant Teaching Professor goes up for tenure, and should those letters focus on classroom teaching or published research on teaching?**

External letters are required for all promotion files. Ideally, the letter writers should address all aspects of the file, including classroom teaching, contributions to pedagogy, published research, and professional service. Teaching-related activities and performance are the most important areas for the letters to focus on, but CAP also relies on letter writers' evaluation of the scholarly activity and service.

Particularly for tenure cases, the best practice is to solicit letters from tenured faculty who are also in the Professor of Teaching series at other UCs, or in similar positions elsewhere. CAP understands that this is a relatively small group of individuals to choose from so letters from tenured faculty in the Professor series may be necessary. In either case, be sure that the solicitation is clear about UCM's expectations for Professors of Teaching faculty, as explained in APM 210.

## **TEACHING**

**How do I write an effective Teaching Self Statement?**

CAP encourages faculty to carefully describe how they generate effective learning outcomes and others successes in the classroom. CAP recognizes that some teaching techniques may not lead to clear-cut results. The reflective teaching statement should describe both a candidate's successes and where things may not have gone as well as hoped. CAP appreciates teaching statements that directly address negative comments that may have been received during the review period. A description of improvements the faculty member seeks to employ for future

classes is helpful, but evidence of on-going improvements and engagement with student feedback is given more weight than possible future efforts.

### **How worried should I be about a negative set of teaching evaluations?**

CAP members understand that classes sometimes do not go as planned, whether because of individual circumstances or failed attempts at new pedagogies. It can be helpful if faculty address such issues in their reflective teaching sections. Generally, blaming students' lack of preparation or behavior is not seen as an effective strategy. Explaining how you might change your pedagogy to teach the students you have, or seeking additional resources to improve your teaching (e.g., assistance from CETL, professional workshops), is more persuasive. Most persuasive is demonstrating improvement in teaching practices over time.

### **How does CAP use teaching evaluations when extensive research shows their biases?**

In assessing teaching, CAP takes a holistic viewpoint of the teaching evaluations, considering them alongside discussion of teaching in the self-statement and other materials, such as peer reviews. In its discussions of teaching, CAP routinely discusses research on biases and best practices, and are generally skeptical of self-selected positive or negative student comments.

CAP pays more attention to students' comments than numeric values when assessing course evaluations, especially when there are recurrent comments (e.g., "disorganized" "never gives feedback", "always late", "intimidating", "best class I ever had", "very clear lectures", "inspires me), rather than numerical evaluation scores.

In addition, CAP considers response rates and values faculty efforts to encourage students to fill out evaluations.

### **Is a lack of graduate teaching and mentoring necessarily seen as unsatisfactory?**

CAP members recognize that graduate student teaching and mentoring expectations can vary across campus, across disciplines, and across the career. Generally, CAP looks for teaching contributions to both undergraduate and graduate students. For instance, in some disciplines, graduate mentoring is an expected, integral part of research productivity, while in others, graduate students work autonomously. CAP also knows that some departments do not have graduate programs or have small graduate programs in which only some faculty will have the opportunity to work with graduate students. On the other hand, faculty in fields with graduate mentoring and funding expectations who do not have their own advisees is a potential cause for concern. Candidates and departments are encouraged to explain their local situation to help all

levels of review, including CAP, to adequately evaluate within that context.

## **SERVICE**

### **Is Academic Senate service required?**

As faculty members advance into higher levels, CAP expects to see more university service outside the department, for instance, for the campus or the system. Academic Senate service specifically is not required at any level, though significant service to faculty governance is appreciated. CAP recognizes that faculty can contribute to their schools and to the campus through many means, of which Senate service is just one.

### **How much service is required for each step?**

The higher the professorial rank, the more service CAP expects, both in quantity, and expansiveness (beyond the department), and level of responsibility or commitment. For instance, serving as a department chair is considered a significant contribution to service even though it is department-based. Faculty members should demonstrate how engaged they were in various service contributions, including their roles, level of engagement, frequency of meeting participation, successes such as notable outcomes or innovations, leadership duties, etc.

CAP also encourages departments to indicate whether the service contributions were compensated (without mentioning amount of payment), for instance, teaching release, summer funding – but do not include detailed pay information) for various service roles. Compensation does not negate service, but it does help CAP understand the extent of the extra effort involved.

## **GENERAL REVIEW PROCESS**

### **Should I ask a CAP member...**

**How my case is going or if my case has been reviewed yet?** No.

**For advice on a colleague's case?** No. Such information is confidential.

**Why a negative recommendation was made on my own case or a colleague's case?** No. Such information is confidential.

If you have review-related questions when your file is in preparation or under review, please check with the concerned Department Chair or school AP staff. If they cannot answer your questions, they should be able to direct you to the appropriate person to consult. CAP members

may not bring up specific personnel cases, including specific cases cloaked as “hypotheticals.” All personnel file details and CAP deliberations are confidential.

**My department knows me and my work much better than CAP. Why does CAP’s recommendation decision on my case differ from my department’s recommendation decision?**

CAP’s role is to provide another check and balance in the review process, specifically, a broad, campuswide faculty perspective. CAP reviews approximately 100+ cases annually at all levels of the professoriate. This helps ensure equity across the campus. The better prepared and more complete a case is, the easier it is for CAP to understand and contextualize the contributions of a given faculty member and make a well-informed decision.

**What does an ideal case analysis look like?**

The ideal department letter is not a regurgitation of what the candidate has already presented. Rather, it includes an analytic evaluation of the faculty member’s contributions in the review period. CAP discourages long enumerated lists of accomplishments that may already be listed in the Bio-bib. Explaining contributions in the aggregate is best, for example: Faculty Y’s research is good overall, judged by the two articles that make significant contributions to understanding ABC. Faculty Z’s teaching is exceptional, as evidenced by having served as a pedagogical expert to multiple programs; overhauling the introductory series to increase student learning and regularly teaching an overload of independent studies. Faculty X’s campus service is very good as evidenced by chairing a department search committee and serving on a Senate committee for three years. Faculty X’s professional stature in the field is outstanding, as evidenced by three research awards, five keynote talk, and service as president of a national organization. External letters for Faculty X are uniformly positive, with several calling the work some of the best in the field, and five explicitly stating that the promotion is long overdue.

For merits and accelerations, two pages of text is generally plenty for a department evaluation. For career reviews, it is rarely necessary for departments to present more than four pages of text, and less is often more effective.

CAP members do not need to see verbatim excerpts of student comments from course evaluations, external letters, or other materials already included in the personnel file. These are generally ineffective and come across as cherry picking rather than as a thoughtful analysis of the case.

**Are there specific criteria for a promotion file that the department can ask for when requesting letters from external letter writers?**

There are no specific criteria for promotions as they vary widely by discipline. Informative letters identify the impact of the candidate's scholarly work and whether it is consistent with someone who would receive promotion at their own institution.

**How are members from interdisciplinary departments/units evaluated?**

CAP is mindful of the review of interdisciplinary research and instruction, especially since many of our programs are intentionally interdisciplinary. CAP membership, which is diverse, covers a wide range of expertise and all members comment on cases, which provides a broad perspective on research and instructional activities for all cases. It is most helpful if case materials and external letters explicitly address the nature and context of interdisciplinary work, and if possible, explain the candidate's specific contributions. External letters from experts in multiple disciplines relevant to the candidate's scholarly work can be useful for a holistic evaluation, especially if they explain how the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work fits into a larger context.

**Is there an optimal or absolute number of publications? To what extent is that department or field specific?**

No. In its guidelines for review and appraisal of appointments and promotions, APM-210 advises: "There should be evidence that the candidate is continuously and effectively engaged in creative activity of high quality and significance." Published works or other creative activity should demonstrate excellence and sustained productivity commensurate with the period of review and the candidate's career stage. The case analysis and letters should always attempt to place the candidate's work in the context of discipline-specific expectations.