Model Guidelines for Indepth Assessment of Teaching

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Rationale

In evaluating each candidate's research, members of departmental, College, and University P&T committees rely on external scholarly reviews from individuals with expertise in the candidate's field. They are not expected to make a decision based only on the candidate-supplied materials. The attached model provides a parallel mechanism for providing committees with scholarly reviews of the candidate's teaching performance based upon materials supplied to the expert reviewers.

Similar to the research review process, we recommend that the Department Head facilitate identification of expert peer reviewers. We recommend that reviewers always be selected from outside the candidate's department and, in the case where the candidate is seeking promotion or tenure based on *(promise of) excellence* in teaching, we further recommend that reviewers be selected from outside MSU. This may be accomplished by contacting discipline specific professional organizations that often have staff or officers who work closely with individuals involved in teaching and learning issues. Because this form of review is relatively uncommon, it is important that detailed guidance be provided in the cover letter sent to reviewers.

The following guidelines for conducting an indepth assessment of teaching are designed to serve as a *model* for departments seeking to design their own procedures for conducting this review. In creating this model we have made some arbitrary decisions such as the exact number of student letters to be solicited and the respective roles of the candidate, the Department Head, and the Departmental P&T committee in gathering materials. We fully expect that departments will change these as appropriate for their needs. Note that specific College or departmental requirements may supercede some of our recommendations. Additional commentary to explain some elements has been added in *italics*.

Model Guidelines for Indepth Assessment of Teaching

Overview

An indepth assessment of teaching is a required component of the dossier of all candidates seeking promotion and/or tenure at Montana State University. To satisfy this requirement each candidate is required to submit a teaching portfolio (see guidelines below), which will be distributed for expert review to a minimum of three reviewers. The department, College, and University P&T committees will then base their recommendations on both the expert reviews and, if required, an independent assessment of the teaching portfolios. As is the case in the review of research, the P&T committees will rely heavily on the expert reviews.

Candidates seeking promotion and/or tenure based on the standard of (promise of) *excellence* in teaching must include in their portfolios all of the materials listed below except items 5 and 10. The reviews of these portfolios will be conducted by a minimum of three off-campus reviewers with expertise in teaching. No more than two of the reviewers will be selected from a list provided by the candidate.

Candidates seeking promotion and/or tenure based on the standard of *effectiveness* in teaching are required to submit only those items marked with an asterisk (*). The expert reviews will be conducted by a minimum of three reviewers selected from outside the Department but not necessarily from outside MSU (additional reviews may be solicited from within the department). No more than two of the reviewers will be selected from a list provided by the candidate.

The process of compiling a teaching portfolio that demonstrates growth should begin in the candidate's first semester and all faculty are urged to regularly review their teaching portfolios with the Department Head.

Contents of the Teaching Portfolio

1. ***Statement** – A brief (up to 500 words) statement in which the candidate describes her/his approach to teaching and learning. Candidates should specifically address how they gauge the level of student learning.

2. ***Course List** – The candidate will supply a list of courses taught during the review period, number of credit and/or contact hours for each course, and number of students per course.

   We recommend that the Department Head supply comparative information to help reviewers interpret the teaching load within the department.

3. ***Student Evaluation of Faculty Forms** – The Department Head will provide a complete summary of student evaluation forms including a brief synopsis of written comments. The actual forms will not be included, but will be placed in separate

binders and made available to the P&T committees upon request. The candidate is encouraged to supply a brief narrative offering his or her interpretation of the results. Other forms of student feedback (e.g., a Danforth review) can also be included in this section.

Because the external reviewers will not necessarily be acquainted with MSU's particular campus culture or norms we recommend that the Department Head supply information to aid in establishing the context of the numerical data. This could include, for instance, departmental and/or College averages (where appropriate) either collectively or disaggregated by course level (i.e., freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior) or course type (i.e., survey, major, non-major, elective, required, etc.).

4. ***Course Materials** – For each of two different courses taught by the candidate, he/she will supply the course syllabus listing course goals, a sample student assignment, a sample examination, and other relevant course materials. This will be accompanied by a description from the candidate that explains why the course is designed the way it is, how it coordinates with other courses or programs, and how the evidence presented is designed to help students meet the course goals.

5. **Student Work Samples –** Where appropriate, candidates may supply student work samples as evidence of improvements in student understanding or performance. Examples that demonstrate student growth are more useful than exemplary final products and candidates are cautioned against focusing on the work of only their top students. An interpretative narrative describing how the candidate's teaching influenced the work must accompany these work samples.

6. **Video** – A 10-30 minute video clip that demonstrates classroom teaching and a description from the candidate that explains the context of the video clip, the learning goals addressed during this segment and why it exemplifies the candidate's teaching abilities.

7. **Classroom Observations** – Multiple observations of at least three different courses will be conducted according to the departmental procedure for peer observations of teaching, which is available from the Department Head. The observers will be selected by the Head and may be selected from outside the department.

We encourage departments to develop an observation protocol that includes specific instructions on how to conduct and report the observations. Sample materials and forms being used at other institutions will be available at the MSU IR web site.

8. *****Letters** – Ten letters from students describing their experiences in the candidate's courses will be collected. The candidate should supply the Department Head with a list of ten to twenty names of former students from whom the candidate would like letters solicited; the Head will select five students from this list. The candidate will also supply complete class rolls for at least five courses from which the Head will select an additional five students to be contacted. The candidate is encouraged to

represent the complete range of courses she/he has taught (for instance, it should not be limited to upper level courses). Efforts will be made to obtain letters from both recent students and alumni students.

Just as in the indepth assessment of research where not every experiment is reported during external review, we recommend that the candidate have some input in selecting the classes and students from whom review letters will be solicited. Annual reviews provide an excellent opportunity to remind candidates of the importance of maintaining a list of specific students and classes from which they would like students to be solicited.

9. **Evidence of Innovation** – Candidates will provide evidence of any innovations and an explanation for why the evidence demonstrates innovation in teaching. Assessment data on the effectiveness of the innovations is strongly encouraged.

10. **Contributions Beyond the Candidate's Classroom** – Some candidates might be involved in educational efforts that extend beyond the individual's classroom. This could include such activities as textbook writing, K-12 curriculum development, involvement in professional societies, or writing about teaching innovations. In cases where these activities have direct impact on the candidate's classroom, they should be included in section 9: *Evidence of Innovation*. Otherwise such materials may be included in this section, which will be reviewed separately by the external reviewers. The candidate is encouraged to supply a brief written interpretation of the materials.

The reason that this section is distinct from general innovations is that the higher education literature suggests that the link between writing about teaching and teaching effectiveness is weak at best. However, in cases where these efforts cannot appropriately be included within the research-section of a candidate's dossier, they should be included here.