

# **The RTP Criteria for Retention, Tenure and Promotion for The School of Cinema**

Approved by full faculty vote on May 28, 2020  
Approved by the Office of Faculty Affairs &  
Professional Development on August 19, 2020

Note regarding pandemic conditions: The department and university are aware that the pandemic has affected faculty ability to accomplish their professional goals at the same rate previously expected. The impact affects some faculty more than others, depending on resources required for PAG and personal circumstances. The Academic Senate has passed a resolution aimed at mitigating some of these effects (*S20-287*). *Please refer to the policy for details.*

## **A. Basic Principles and Procedures**

The criteria described here clarify the expectations of the School of Cinema in relation to the University's criteria for the determination of retention, tenure and promotion as specified in the *Faculty Manual* and the relevant Senate policies. The goal of these School criteria is to ensure that there is a clear understanding of how the School interprets and applies retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) criteria to ensure as fair and equitable a review process as possible in the assessment of faculty work represented in the Working Personnel Action File (WPAF). The WPAF, now required in electronic form as called for by Academic Senate Policy #S15-272 (the eWPAF), represents the Cinema candidate's case for retention, tenure and/or promotion as it goes through the department/school, college, and university review process.

The School of Cinema's overall mission manifests in three degree programs with overlapping goals: 1) a BA degree which provides a high quality undergraduate education in accord with the basic tenets of a liberal arts education; 2) an MA in Cinema Studies which seeks to provide more advanced forms of knowledge and familiarity with methodologies relevant to the study of cinema; and 3) an MFA degree in Cinema Production which seeks to provide the highest level of instruction possible in the creative production of works of cinema. The combination of the study of the history, theory and criticism of the discipline along with the production of individual works of cinema, broadly defined as time-based moving image work, is

at the heart of the School's liberal arts approach to cinema in contradistinction to vocational or conservatory training. All three degree programs involve an integration of study and production and continue to draw on the School's historic role as a center for independent, innovative forms of cinema.

The School of Cinema follows the general principles established in Academic Senate Policy that work conducted at current rank is the primary focus for consideration for promotion. With respect to achievements in current rank, the School of Cinema adheres to the same Academic Senate Policy: "Achievements *in current rank* should demonstrate promise of meritorious activities comparable to the achievements and services expected of faculty who serve at the rank to which the individual is to be promoted." Specific guidelines for each rank are provided below.

The requirements for retention, tenure and promotion are divided into three parts: (1) Teaching Effectiveness, (2) Professional Achievement and Growth, and (3) Contributions to Campus and Community (Service).

The RTP committee will be staffed by tenured School faculty serving (whenever possible) staggered, three-year terms of office to ensure continuity from one year to the next. In the event that there are not enough Full Professors to staff the RTP committee (e.g., in the evaluation of a candidate for Full Professor), the School Director and the sitting RTP committee may recruit a Full Professor(s) from outside the School.

The portion of the WPAF, or eWPAF, is prepared by the faculty member using the guidelines described in the *Faculty Manual* and on the Faculty Affairs [website](#). It is the faculty member's responsibility to collect and submit pertinent information for each review period according to the Faculty Manual.

## **B. Teaching Effectiveness**

Assessment of teaching effectiveness is required to be considered for tenure-track faculty, and any subsequent promotion. It is expected that each faculty demonstrates high standards of instruction. Teaching effectiveness is assessed in the following ways:

1. Student Evaluations: Every class is evaluated by the enrolled students through the web-based assessment system: the Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE). The SETEs collect quantitative and qualitative data. The School of Cinema considers SETE data to be an important factor in assessing a

candidate's case for tenure and/or promotion. In general, RTP regards an average score on SETEs that are below (and thus better than) the School faculty's overall average score to be evidence of excellent teaching. RTP regards an average score on SETEs that matches, or is very close to the School faculty's overall average score to be evidence of effective teaching. Both excellent and effective teaching meet the expectations of the School regarding teaching performance. RTP regards an average score on SETEs that is significantly higher (and thus poorer) than the School's overall average score to be possible evidence of problematic teaching that indicates a need for further review. A weak average score coupled to other signs of concern such as written comments by student or peer evaluations may prove cause for immediate concern and require the use of additional peer reviews and more concrete advice or mentoring for the candidate. The School values improvement over time and places greater emphasis on the final two years prior to tenure if the earlier teaching evaluations fall outside the normative range.

The School will maintain a standard evaluation form designed to assess both quantitative and qualitative data.

The RTP committee recognizes that student evaluations may be skewed by class size, prior experience of the student, grades anticipated or received, and other factors. The RTP committee will attempt to discern significant patterns within the data and make note of them accordingly. Written comments, collected SETE reports, will be assessed for general patterns as an important part of the overall body of evidence. Because comments collected in SETE reports are unsigned, isolated comments, or seemingly idiosyncratic opinions will be given slight consideration. The goal will be to detect perceptions shared by a number of students.

2. Peer Evaluations: Peer assessment refers primarily to formal peer observations by tenured faculty, but it may also include assessments from San Francisco State University colleagues at a higher rank who team teach, mentor or informally attend the candidate's classes. All evaluations, except statistical data, must be signed. Probationary faculty may observe Lecturers; however, probationary faculty are *not* expected to conduct peer evaluations of Lecturers. As part of a probationary faculty's pedagogical development, the School recognizes the value of observing such evaluations. Should a junior member of the faculty elect to observe the peer evaluation process as it pertains to Lecturers, they may accompany a senior faculty person as a mentor. No

probationary faculty person will be penalized for not conducting peer evaluations.

The RTP committee will have the responsibility for scheduling and conducting peer reviews at least once a semester for each probationary faculty member. In such evaluations, members of the RTP committee and other senior faculty members will visit classes taught by probationary faculty and provide written comments concerning the quality of teaching. Specific areas of evaluation will be:

- a. the overall syllabus, the learning outcomes established therein, and whether the instruction works toward the stated learning outcomes;
- b. evidence of preparation for the specific class;
- c. knowledge of the course's subject matter, including familiarity with recent work relevant to the topic at hand;
- d. the quality of the interaction between faculty and students and the appropriateness of the work covered for the level of the course;
- e. the ability of the instructor to stimulate thought or creativity, including the ability to convey unresolved questions or new possibilities;
- f. other evidence of teaching skills deemed relevant by the evaluator;
- g. see Appendix 1 for peer evaluation form, and for further evaluator guidelines.

Probationary faculty may also request peer reviews of their courses on their own initiative so long as the selected reviewer is a member of the San Francisco State University faculty holding the rank of Associate or Full Professor.

For promotion from Associate to Full Professor candidates are expected to demonstrate continuing efforts to improve their teaching. In addition, they are expected to demonstrate leadership in developing teaching more broadly by contributing, when applicable, to things such as: Mentoring junior faculty through classroom observation and sharing of teaching techniques; leading program development and evaluation; and ongoing curriculum innovation and development. It is expected that during the ranks of Associate Professor that the candidate will maintain positive SETE evaluations and strong peer reviews.

All reviews should be placed in the candidate's WPAF and a copy provided to both the Chair of the RTP committee and Director of the School.

3. Letters from Students (optional): Faculty seeking tenure and promotion to Associate Professor or promotion to Full Professor should not request

recommendations from students directly, but may request the assistance from the RTP committee for securing written statements from students for whom they served as a supervisor for independent study, internships, and graduate thesis work. The candidate is expected to provide to the RTP committee a list of student names, email address and courses they took from the candidate.

4. **Instructional Development:** The School of Cinema recognizes that teaching is an evolutionary endeavor. As such, the School wants to encourage its faculty to make pedagogical innovations, to evolve as educators, and to expand their repertoire of pedagogical tools. Instructional development can be demonstrated by evidence of enrolling in continuing study, attendance at professional conferences and workshops, and individually implemented curriculum development.

5. **Advising:** RTP understands that advising comes in many different forms, and that advising activities do not necessarily result in tangible forms or measurable outcomes. The assessment of advising activities might include some of the following:

- a. Information derived from graduation surveys;
- b. student letters and interviews;
- c. record of supervision and successful completion of MA Theses, MFA Thesis Films, or other independent student projects;
- d. record of signed graduation application reviews.

It is the responsibility of the RTP committee and the School Director to assimilate and to contextualize the forms of evaluation listed above in their respective evaluation letters.

6. **Teaching Effectiveness for Promotion from Associate Professor to Full Professor.** Candidates are expected to demonstrate continuing efforts to improve their teaching in the numbered areas above. In addition, they must demonstrate leadership in developing departmental teaching more broadly by contributing, for example, in:

- a. Mentoring junior faculty through classroom observation and sharing of teaching techniques;
- b. Mentoring undergraduate or graduate students in special projects, thesis, presentations, manuscript preparation and other scholarly work; Leading program development and evaluation; or
- c. Demonstrating leadership in curriculum innovation and development. The RTP Committee will evaluate all applicable factors listed above in its final determination of teaching performance.

### **C. Professional Achievement and Growth**

The School expects faculty members to develop a reasonable research or creative work agenda, understanding that, as a teaching university, SFSU requires a greater teaching load than the norm for research universities. The School nevertheless sees professional achievement and growth as an indispensable component of all university level teaching and therefore expects candidates to demonstrate significant scholarly and/or creative accomplishment as a condition of retention, tenure and promotion.

The School recognizes that a wide range of professional activities—from scholarly work to creative works—constitute evidence of professional achievement and growth. Given the inherent variations in the various fields of study and production we represent, the School has consciously built into our criteria a degree of flexibility. Moreover, we recognize that cinema is (in most cases) a collective endeavor, and we value the individual contributions that our faculty make (e.g., historiography, cinematography, etc.) to the cinematic arts.

According to Senate policy, curricular innovations may be applied to candidate's professional achievements and growth. The Senate policy states: "Curricular and/or programmatic innovations in the discipline, across disciplines, or for the benefit of General Education may qualify as professional achievement and growth. Such activities may include the development of original academic programs, new courses or course content, disciplinary and/or pedagogical approaches, applications of technology, etc. Development of new areas of instructional expertise may also be considered in this category." The Senate policy goes on to note that, "Research in the discipline, across disciplines, or for the benefit of general education may result in significant curricular developments. Such results should become part of the evidence supporting a candidate's retention, tenure, and promotion."

The School of Cinema requires external reviews of a candidate going up for tenure and promotion—be that from probationary to tenured Associate Professor, or Associate to Full Professor. (See Appendix 2 for the procedures for identifying external reviewers and the solicitation of letters.) External reviewers are prompted to address a candidate's professional profile, and the letters collectively are an important determinant in weighing the significance of a candidate's professional portfolio.

In addition to the external letters, documentation and evidence of a candidate's professional reputation can come in many forms. These might include:

- Published book review
- Published film review
- Evidence of book adoption in classes
- Awards
- Selection in a juried film festival
- Competitive external grants

Regardless of the manifestation of the professional work produced by a candidate, the general expectation of faculty seeking promotion at all levels is that the candidate makes significant on-going contributions to the field. Active participation might manifest in the following ways:

- Conference presentations
- Visiting lectures
- Screenings

Evidence of professional activities might be presented in published programs, invitation letters, etc.

Work completed prior to the faculty's hire and/or current rank may be considered secondarily, and not on its own merits *per se*, but on its impact. In other words, the School recognizes that professional work—be it creative or scholarly—has “a life of its own,” and can have long-lived effects on the field after its initial publication/release. As one part of RTP's assessment, the committee might include the *impact* of work prior to their current rank by pointing to such metrics as:

- Growth of citations or distribution contracts
- Reprints or inclusion in compendiums and collections
- Course adoptions (films and books)

The School of Cinema expects important projects to take a number of years from inception to publication/release. Consequently, in weighing merit for tenure and/or promotion to Associate Professor or promotion to Full Professor, the School may adjust the measures of professional output employed above to take into consideration the nature of a project, or the project's impact on the field. The School's RTP committee will offer explicit justifications for such a determination.

The School of Cinema has established the following guidelines for assessing professional achievements and growth at various points in a faculty member's career.

a. Retention: It is expected that probationary faculty (tenure-track faculty) will demonstrate a pattern of professional achievement and growth prior to tenure. Probationary faculty are expected to make contributions to the field of the cinematic arts in their respective area demonstrating clear progress toward meeting the standards for tenure and promotion (as stipulated below).

b. Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor: For tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, the general expectation is that the candidate will have produced significant work (or a collection of works that are significant) during their time in the rank of Assistant Professor. The list provided immediately below outlines the conventional model for the production of significant professional work. This is NOT to mean that these are the only items that can be considered as satisfying the requirement for professional achievement and growth:

- A monograph
- A textbook
- A series of peer reviewed articles
- A series of book chapters in works published by academic presses
- A film (or films) screened at festivals, earning a national distribution contract, or national/regional broadcast
- Work on a series of films (e.g., sound editor, cinematographer)
- Screenplays that achieve recognition through a sale or option, or peer evaluation in competition or through the official peer review procedures of the UFVA or other professional organization.
- Curation of a significant film series or festival program with a respected institution.

Probationary faculty wishing to go up for early tenure and promotion might be considered in exceptional cases. All of the criteria listed above for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure must be met, *and* that each area of assessment (teaching, professional profile, and service) is of stellar quality.

c. Promotion to Full Professor: While the process of promotion of Associate Professor to Full Professor is similar to the process of moving from Assistant Professor to tenured Associate Professor, there are general expectations that the candidate for Full Professor will demonstrate a degree of professional maturity. For promotion from Associate Professor to Full Professor, the general expectation is that the candidate will have produced significant work (or a collection of works that are significant) that demonstrates scholarly or creative maturity. Maturity might be measured in a number of different ways, including,



but not limited to: publication with a more esteemed press, selection of a film at a prestigious film festival. The list provided immediately below outlines the conventional model for the production of significant mature professional work. This is NOT to mean that these are the only items that can be considered as satisfying the requirement for professional achievement and growth:

- A second monograph (with a university press)
- A second textbook, and/or a textbook in a new edition (with evidence of wide-adoption)
- A series of peer reviewed articles (in esteemed journals)
- A series of book chapters
- A film (or films) (in prestigious film festival(s), national distribution contract, national/regional broadcast, internationally recognized)
- Work on a series of films (e.g., sound editor, cinematographer)
- A screenplay (that achieves recognition through a sale or option, or peer evaluation in competition or through the official peer review procedures of the UFVA or other professional organization)
- Curation (e.g., a significant film series/festival program)

#### **D. Contributions to Campus and Community (Service)**

Candidates can demonstrate their service to the campus and community via contributions to the School, the greater university, professional organizations or the community at local, regional, state or wider levels.

The School of Cinema considers service in a peer-related, professional setting to be the most important aspect of service since this normally requires the direct application of the faculty member's academic expertise. This criterion is primarily fulfilled by membership and participation on School, college, and university-wide committees and by involvement in professional societies and organizations. It can also be fulfilled by activities in support of student organizations, such as Cinema Collective, Black Film Club, DELTA KAPPA ALPHA and the Animation Society, among others, planning or sponsoring events with educational value, or through membership on university commissions, planning groups, or governance organizations. In each case, service is demonstrated by active participation in the affairs of the group and supported by unsolicited documentation from those in a leadership position to assess its significance.

Serving as an invited reader/evaluator for book or journal manuscripts is also treated as a form of professional service, as is serving as an invited juror for film

festivals. Such service should be documented in writing, with letters (or email) from publishers or festivals respectively.

Probationary faculty can also serve the broader public by making their professional expertise available to community groups, social organizations and governmental agencies that generally serve the public good. Documentation is expected in this case as well. Work done under confidentiality agreements may not be considered for retention, tenure or promotion.

1. Candidates for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor should have made important contributions on School committees.
2. Candidates for promotion to Professor should have made some contributions at the College and/or Campus and/or System as well as School level.
3. Demonstrate practices in the community and campus that may include:
  - a. Attends and participates in department/campus wide meetings regularly as a contributing team player.
  - b. Volunteers for tasks and follows through, completing work in a timely fashion.
  - c. Demonstrates effective group process skills by sharing ideas, listening actively, confronting conflict constructively, engaging in analysis and problem solving, and demonstrating academic and professional respect for colleagues.
  - d. When possible, serves as a mentor to new tenure-track faculty.
  - e. Contributes to the long-term success, goals, and teaching needs of the school.

#### **E. Professional Education and/or Equivalency and Experience**

As an academic unit, working within a liberal arts tradition, the PhD, MFA or equivalency degree granted by the university at the time of hire is the accepted terminal degree for faculty members in the School of Cinema.

#### **F. Documentation**

Faculty members are expected to document their work and contributions in criteria established above. Documentation typically includes, but is not limited to: all required documents required for the eWPAF (e.g., SETE reports, syllabi, retention letters from previous years)—see the *eWPAF Section Guidelines* found on the Faculty

Affairs website under [Retention, Tenure, and Promotion eWPAF: Candidate Resources](#) prepared by the Office of Faculty Affairs

- written peer reviews of teaching
- signed letters from peers, students, staff or colleagues
- relevant email correspondence
- copies of articles, book chapters, papers, videos (e.g., Vimeo URLs), other exhibited media
- evidence of presentation of scholarly or creative work (e.g., conference or festival program)
- evidence of participation in organizations and committees, peer review assessments concerning the quality of creative or scholarly work, reader or curator/programmer testimony, editorial comments, published reviews, letters (or emails) attesting to service contributions in the various categories of service
- letters or emails from past or present students and others familiar with the candidate's work.

Such documentation will be placed in the eWPAF File following the guidelines defined in the *Faculty Manual* or Faculty Affairs website.

**APPENDIX 1 Classroom Observation Form**



Classroom Observation Form

Observation conducted by:

\_\_\_\_\_

RANK AND NAME

Date of observation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Individual observed:

\_\_\_\_\_

To RTP and Director of the School of Cinema:

*Introduction:*

*Evaluation:*

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Instructions on filling out and submitting classroom observations.

The university requires that all instructors have classroom observations on file. It is critical that Assistant and Associate level faculty have an ample collection of peer-observations as it constitutes a significant part of your tenure/promotion file. Lecturers are also required to have class observations done—these can be advantageous as a material record of one's professional skills as an instructor.

Reviewees should be given at least two weeks notification, but in a collegial spirit the reviewer and reviewee should reach a mutually agreed upon time. The reviewee should try to identify a particular session and class-time that is most emblematic of their teaching.

A reviewer should spend at least an hour in-class. The reviewer's report should be approximately a page in length, and should lean more towards the evaluative, than the descriptive. Remember that individuals from outside our discipline—physicists, economists, etc.—are likely to be reading these, and if these are going to be effective tools in illustrating the strength of our instructors it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate not simply *what* the instructor taught, but *HOW they did it*. Read the reviewee's syllabus before your observation.

Fill out the form above. In the section identified as "Introduction," contextualize the report. What is the class, when did you conduct the observation, what are the course objectives? In the "Evaluation" section, determine whether the lesson appears to be working towards the course objectives. And, *how* is the course working towards the course objectives?

Submit this form via email to: The designated member of RTP, the School Director, to the School Operations Manager, and the Assistant Academic Office Coordinator.

## **APPENDIX 2 External Reviews for Tenure and Promotion**

The School of Cinema requires external reviews of a faculty member's professional work as part of the tenure and promotion process. The RTP committee will work in consultation with candidates for tenure or promotion and with the School Director to identify a list of potential reviewers. Guidelines for the process are as follow:

- Candidates may propose up to seven outside reviewers. The RTP committee, in consultation with the Director, may add up to seven additional outside reviewers. The RTP committee, the candidate, and the School Director will discuss the list of fourteen possible reviewers to arrive at a final list of eight to ten potential reviewers. During this stage of the process all parties have the right to veto suggested reviewers while maintaining a balance between the two lists. The RTP committee will select and rank reviewers from the final list making an effort to maintain a balance between the candidate's list and the RTP/chair's list.
- Reviewers shall not have been the candidate's graduate thesis/dissertation chair or committee member.
- Reviewers shall not be close colleagues within SFSU.
- Academic reviewers shall be from CSU comparable institutions or higher, and hold a higher rank than the candidate being reviewed.
- The School acknowledges the collaborative nature of creative work in cinema. As such, for the evaluation of creative work, the candidate, RTP committee, and School Director may identify a list of established professionals with whom the candidate may have collaborated and are able to evaluate the quality, value and uniqueness of the candidate's creative work and contributions to the field.
- In cases where a list includes both academic and professional reviewers, the RTP committee, the candidate, and the School Director will work collaboratively to insure a balance between both groups of reviewers.
- Reviewers will be asked to include a description of their relationship to the candidate and state potential conflicts of interest they might have in doing the review.
- Reviewers will be informed that candidates have access to their letters (i.e., the letters are not anonymous, which is more typical of an external review).
- Candidates shall provide the RTP committee with the following materials to be sent to reviewers by June 1 before the fall semester in which the candidate's file is due:
  - Personal statement
  - Current CV
  - Three items from the candidate's professional work of her/his own choosing.

The RTP Chair will begin the invitation process, track the process of securing the external reviews, answer questions from the reviewers, receive review letters, and turn

the letters over to candidate to be uploaded to their eWPAF. Along with the letters, the RTP chair will also write short biographical sketches of each outside reviewer, which will likewise be submitted to the candidate to upload to their eWPAF.

TEMPLATE for a request to be an external reviewer:



DATE

RE: Request to Review BLANK

NAME

I am writing to seek your assistance in evaluating the professional/creative work of BLANK—our colleague in the School of Cinema at San Francisco State University. BLANK is being considered for promotion to Full Professor/Associate Professor and tenure this coming academic year BLANK.

Because of your expertise in the field of BLANK you have been suggested as someone who might be willing to review examples of BLANK's professional/creative work and prepare a written evaluation for inclusion in his/her file—from one to two pages in length. We would require the evaluation by Friday, [EARLY SEPTEMBER] . I realize that accepting this request requires time, thought, and effort. I hope you will consider doing so as your insights will help assure that BLANK's work receive a thorough and thoughtful review. It would be an enormous favor for us, and we would be indebted for your help. We are asking you to assess his/her professional standing and the quality of his/her work—we do not expect you to assess his/her teaching.

What is most helpful to us is an evaluative assessment—situating the candidate in their respective field. Or, generally, in your professional opinion how would you rank the candidate relative to the field.

Please let us know by [EARLY JUNE] whether you will be willing to evaluate BLANK. Should you accept, you'll be sent a short narrative prepared by BLANK, his/her CV, and sample of their publications/links to films hosted on VIMEO.



In the interest of transparency, and because policies can vary quite dramatically from institution to institution, let me detail the process:

- I (the RTP chair) corresponds with external letter writers, and collects all letters written on behalf of our candidate.
- During the Fall term (typically mid-September) all letters are transmitted to the candidate who uploads them to their electronic portfolio. PLEASE be aware that the candidate will see your letter.
- The candidate's portfolio (including external letters) is subsequently reviewed by:
  - RTP
  - The Director of the School of Cinema
  - The Dean of the College
  - The University Tenure and Promotion Committee
  - The Provost
  - The President of the University

Thank you very much for your time and consideration,

BLANK, RTP Chair

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[1] "Retention, Tenure and Promotion Policy (S19-241), approval April 09, 2019:  
<https://Senate.sfsu.edu/policy/retention-tenure-and-promotion-policy-current>