

**Department of Astronomy Promotion Criteria  
for Professional Track Faculty**

**Extracted from Department of Astronomy Plan of Organization Bylaws 2A**

**15 April 2019**

**IV. Elements in evaluating candidates for appointment and promotion**

Performance evaluation at the University is concerned with the candidate's performance in three areas: research, education, and service. PTK faculty activities typically strongly emphasize a subset of these areas, either directly or by supporting the activities, although activity in other areas is recognized.

Each candidate shall provide a description of the division of responsibilities within these categories, as agreed by a supervisor or sponsor if appropriate. Evaluation will be based on progress in these areas, weighted by the division of responsibilities. Minimum expectations for individuals shall be summarized in the University's electronic contract system, and shall be updated at least as frequently as at each contract renewal or major change of responsibility. Evaluation is made against the documented responsibilities at levels appropriate to rank.

The fundamental criterion for appointment and promotion is the candidate's ability and promise to advance knowledge in the field or to communicate it, as appropriate to the position. Advances may be direct or indirect, as described below; in research, education, or service; and must increase appropriately with increasing seniority of rank. Sufficient evidence of professional development and promise for further advances sets a practical minimum time between promotions. Neither the University nor Department specifies a maximum time in rank, but the Department shall monitor progress and time in rank and urge its faculty to consult with mentors and apply for promotion when sufficient progress justifies advancement.

The following evaluation criteria are abstracted from University Policy II-100(A) in effect in 2017, along with additional considerations that the Department finds important:

- A. Research** evaluation centers on the impact of the candidate's ability to advance knowledge in the field. Research contributions fall in two broad categories:
1. Independent work typical of academic basic research. Past work and plans for the future are important indicators, and may be assessed by a variety of criteria such as the quality of the individual's publications, publication journal reputation, citations to refereed publications, assessment of the impact of the individual's research by external experts in the field, receipt of invitations to present invited reviews at national and international meetings, ability to obtain external funding for the research, and research plans.

University policy states that “research of a classified or proprietary nature shall not be considered in weighing an individual's case for appointment or promotion.”

2. Directed activities emphasizing research support that advances the field. This work is generally supervised by a group or activity leader, with well-defined expectations for duties. Evaluation of directed activities is based strongly on how successfully the individual’s work conforms to the specific requirements of the grant or program that has provided funding for the work. Directed activities involve specific elements of skilled work required by a grant or program. These often support research activities but do not directly involve academic research. Examples are data base creation and maintenance, computer programming or hardware maintenance tasks, data analysis or archiving, instrument calibration, and so on.

**B. Education** includes teaching and academic mentoring activities. Teaching is assessed by means of a teaching portfolio, peer teaching reviews, and University course evaluations. The teaching portfolio contents must comply with College and University requirements, and may include references to other materials submitted in conjunction with the assessment (e.g. AE package sections) to reduce redundancy. It typically includes course syllabi for courses taught since the previous evaluation. The portfolio must include summaries of University student course evaluations and peer teaching evaluations. It may additionally include other information that the candidate or Department feels would be helpful in evaluating educational activities, including input from graduate students, particularly including students advised by the individual, information on the quantity and quality of graduate students who have completed theses under the direction of the individual, and accounts of evaluating innovations introduced into the teaching program of the Department.

Research mentoring of students and postdocs is assessed by a description of the mentoring and corresponding mentee activities.

**C. Service** is evaluated by contributions to the University and the profession by activities within the University, to its community (the state and citizens of Maryland), and to the professional community both nationally and internationally. Peer mentoring activities within the Department carry considerable weight in evaluating service. The university requires that “Service activity shall not be expected or required of junior faculty to the point that it interferes with the development of their teaching and research.”

**V. Ranks, titles, and expectations for Professional Track Faculty**

The specific faculty title shall correspond to the majority of the appointee’s effort, as indicated in these assignments and expectations.

**A. Research Scientist/Engineer:**

Appointment at or promotion to these ranks requires evidence of independent scholarly activity, which may include original research or substantial contributions to enabling

research in the field. Service to the University is normally less than for the corresponding professorial ranks.

At all ranks, the Research Engineer track parallels the Research Scientist track, with the difference in designation indicating research emphasis alone. The Department of Astronomy adopts functional designations of Assistant, Associate, and Principal for the first, second and third ranks.

Research Scientist and Engineer titles have no teaching requirements. Because of the lack of teaching, the volume of research or programmatic support is expected to be larger than for the corresponding professorial ranks.

Criteria for appointment and promotion beyond the general guidelines for research, education, and Service in Secs. IV-A, IV-B, and IV-C are:

1. Assistant Research Scientist or Engineer (First rank): Demonstrated independence, creativity, and impact to the field. Candidates for this position generally have a Ph.D. or equivalent. Ability to direct the work of others such as technicians, students, or other research personnel. Anticipated contributions consistent with growth toward the Associate level shall be considered. Appointments to this rank are typically one to three years and are renewable.
2. Associate Research Scientist or Engineer (Second rank): Research accomplishments whose originality, depth and impact establish the candidate as an important contributor to knowledge in their field. Promotion to this rank shall typically first be considered 5 years after promotion to the Assistant level or equivalent. Anticipated contributions consistent with growth toward the Principal level shall be considered. Appointments to this rank are typically one to five years and are renewable.
3. Principal Research Scientist or Engineer (Third rank): Record of research accomplishments that establish the candidate as an outstanding contributor to knowledge in their field. Promotion to this rank shall typically first be considered 5 years after promotion to the Associate level or equivalent. Appointments are typically made as five-year contracts. Appointments for additional five-year terms can be renewed as early as the third year of any given five-year contract.

## **B. Faculty Specialists**

Faculty Specialist titles are typically appropriate for persons who are typically engaged in program work.

Criteria for appointment and promotion beyond the general guidelines for research, education, and Service in Secs. IV-A, IV-B, and IV-C are:

1. Faculty Specialist (First rank): At minimum, the appointee shall hold a Bachelor's degree in a relevant area, or have the equivalent experience in their specialty, as necessary to provide essential support for research, education, and/or the administration of programs

in Astronomy. Faculty Specialists are expected to possess the skills necessary to make independent and meaningful contributions to the success of the programs they support. Appointments to this rank will typically be one to three years and will be renewable.

2. Senior Faculty Specialist (Second rank): The appointee shall show superior ability to support research, education, and/or the administration of programs in Astronomy, as evidenced by successfully discharging responsibilities such as those of the Faculty Specialist for at least three years or having the equivalent experience in an area relevant to their specialty. In addition, the appointee will have demonstrated increased independence, responsibilities, expertise, and/or innovation in their specialty (*e.g.*, through additional education, certifications, supervision, presentations, report generation, and/or publications). Appointments to this rank will typically be one to five years and will be renewable.
3. Principal Faculty Specialist (Third rank): The appointee shall have a proven record of excellence in supporting research, education, and/or the administration of programs in Astronomy, as evidenced by successfully discharging responsibilities such as those of a Senior Faculty Specialist for at least five years or having equivalent experience in an area relevant to their specialty. In addition, the appointee will have demonstrated independence, responsibilities, expertise, and/or innovation in their specialty (*e.g.*, through additional education, certifications, supervision and mentoring, presentations, report generation, proposal efforts, visibility outside the group and/or publications). Appointments will typically be made as five-year contracts. Appointment for additional five-year terms may be renewed as early as the third year of any given five-year contract.

### **C. Lecturers**

The Lecturer title is appropriate for persons primarily engaged in classroom teaching. Criteria for appointment and promotion beyond the general guidelines for research, education, and Service in Secs. IV-A, IV-B, and IV-C are:

1. Junior Lecturer: The title Junior Lecturer will be used to designate appointments of graduate students who are given a faculty appointment to teach. For administrative purpose this title is considered to be at the first rank. Appointments to this rank are typically for terms of up to one year and are renewable for up to six years.
2. Lecturer (First rank): The title Lecturer will be used to designate appointments of persons who are serving in a teaching capacity for a limited time or part-time, or who are full-time and at the entry-level of instruction in the field. The normal requirement is a Master's degree in astronomy or a related field, or equivalent professional experience such as extensive teaching or public outreach in a relevant discipline. The appointee will exhibit promise in the field of teaching, show evidence of a pedagogical, research, or creative agenda (which may include experience as a teaching or research assistant), and have a record of scholarly achievement appropriate to the field. Reappointment at this rank requires demonstrated excellence in teaching (typically evaluated using course evaluations by students, evaluation of lectures by faculty, and innovations in the

teaching program). Appointments to this rank are typically one to three years and are renewable.

3. Senior Lecturer (Second rank): In addition to having the qualifications of a Lecturer, the appointee shall have an exemplary teaching record over the course of at least five years of full-time instruction or its equivalent as a Lecturer (or similar appointment at another institution). This record may be demonstrated through some combination of classroom teaching (typically evaluated using course evaluations by students and evaluation of lectures by faculty), student advising, pedagogically related advising, curriculum development, or innovative pedagogical practices. The appointee shall also demonstrate a record of service and/or mentoring within the Department, the University, and/or the wider community. Appointments to this rank are typically one to five years and are renewable.
4. Principal Lecturer (Third rank): In addition to the qualifications required of the Senior Lecturer, appointees to this rank shall have an exemplary teaching record over the course of at least 5 years of full-time service or its equivalent as a Senior Lecturer (or similar appointment at another institution). The appointee shall also demonstrate a record of excellent service/mentoring within the Department, the University, and/or the wider community. The appointee shall have excellent pedagogical standing in the field, which may be demonstrated in many ways. These may include but are not limited to the following: making significant presentations at national conferences and conventions; placing articles in disciplinary or pedagogical journals; contributing to the production of textbooks or other innovative instructional materials; receiving invitations to serve as an expert in one's field or to make presentations at pedagogical workshops; or making significant, innovative contributions to the curriculum. Appointments to this rank are typically made as five year contracts. Appointments for additional five-year terms can be renewed as early as the third year of any given five-year contract.