

TENURE AND PROMOTION GUIDELINES: Criteria for Tenure

College of Education and Human Development

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This document provides both an overview of the criteria for earning tenure at George Mason University and detailed suggestions about the kind of materials and information that would provide clear and compelling evidence that a tenure candidate has successfully met those criteria.

Overview of the Criteria for Earning an Appointment without Term (aka Tenure)

From the Mason *Faculty Handbook*: 2.4 ***Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty***

Candidates will be evaluated in light of the missions of the University which are teaching; research and scholarship, both theoretical and applied; and service (as defined in [Sections 2.4.1-2.4.3](#)). Only these criteria, as further developed and published by the local academic unit, and approved by the Provost, may be used in evaluations of faculty. Peer review plays a central role in the evaluation of individual achievement in each of these areas. The primary consideration in the evaluation of faculty achievements will be the extent to which these continue to improve the academic quality of the University.

Faculty are not expected to have equal commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these areas. Levels of expectation will vary with the type of decision.

Tenured candidates seeking promotion to the rank of professor without term must maintain high competence in teaching, research/scholarship, and service while also maintaining genuine excellence in teaching or research/scholarship. In addition, evidence of significant impact beyond the boundaries of the University must be much more substantial than in cases involving tenure or promotion to the rank of associate professor without term. Clear and convincing evidence must be provided of an established external reputation in the primary field, based on consequential achievements in teaching, research and scholarship, or professional activities directly related to teaching and research and scholarship. The standards that must be met in teaching, research/scholarship, and service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

Criteria for Achieving High Competence/Genuine Excellence in Teaching

All instructional faculty are expected to fulfill their contractual teaching load and to teach at a high level of effectiveness. Provided below are relevant sections of the *Faculty Handbook* as well as a document provided by the Office of the Provost. These are followed by information specific to achieving Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Teaching in CEHD, including possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio. For additional information and resources, please refer to the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning website (<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/>).

Faculty Handbook: 2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

2.4.1 Teaching

Effective teaching is demonstrated through a combination of course and curricular materials, learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments designed to promote student learning; through review of those materials, outcomes, assignments, and assessments by knowledgeable peers and colleagues; through student evaluations of their learning experiences; and through engaging in professional/teaching development activities.

Examples of contributions to teaching include:

- Development and implementation of new courses, curricula, and programs (face-to-face, online, or hybrid);
- Use of research-based, innovative, inclusive, and/or high-impact teaching and assessment practices;
- Development of instructional materials, including appropriate use of emerging and digital technologies;
- Training and supervision of teaching (graduate) and/or learning (undergraduate) assistants;
- Course coordination for courses with multiple sections;
- Mentoring students, both undergraduate and graduate;
- Clinical and field supervision of students;
- Student academic advising;
- Mentoring faculty colleagues;
- Participating in educational development activities to strengthen knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.

Faculty Handbook: 2.5 Procedures for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

2.5.1 Teaching

Local academic units must regularly evaluate the teaching effectiveness of their faculty. In doing so, they are expected to incorporate data from both peers and students. Whatever additional methods may be used to gather information from students, the process should provide for their anonymous participation in course evaluations and should allow for comparisons among faculty teaching similar courses. Peer evaluation is expected to include, at a minimum, data on the development and implementation of new courses and programs, the appropriateness of course materials currently used, the level and quality of student advising, and learning outcomes. Additional forms of peer evaluation are expected. These may include, but are not limited to, peer observation of classroom teaching, evaluations by mentors, assessments of teaching performance by colleagues, and teaching portfolios.

The evaluation process requires both quantitative and qualitative data. The methods by which such data are gathered and incorporated into the final evaluation should be well-defined and made available to those who are being evaluated, as well as to those who are using the

evaluations in personnel decisions. Specific guidelines for the procedures to be used in the evaluation of teaching effectiveness will be those determined by the office of the Provost in consultation with the University Faculty Standing Committee on Effective Teaching.

Provost's Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Genuine Excellence in Teaching

On the Provost's website at: <https://go.gmu.edu/provost-excel-teach>

Office of the Provost Guidance for Genuine Excellence in Teaching for Tenure-line Faculty

A faculty member's proficiency in the domain of teaching is a critical element for the assessment and evaluation of faculty, including consideration for promotion and tenure. Achieving Genuine Excellence in Teaching requires the demonstration of an intentional commitment to and refinement of teaching practices that lead to student engagement, learning, and success, and that reflect Mason's commitment to inclusive excellence. It also requires deliberate dissemination of information or research about these practices. Genuine Excellence in Teaching goes beyond the criteria for establishing High Competence in Teaching. Evaluation of teaching excellence is informed by faculty peers, student input and feedback, course materials, and faculty members' own reflections as well as other evidence that demonstrates faculty meeting threshold criteria for Genuine Excellence in Teaching. Other evidence can include but is not limited to additional recognition of scholarship to include scholarly awards, national or international recognition of teaching excellence and the winning of competitive grants or funding in the area of teaching and education.

Faculty seeking promotion and/or tenure are expected to meet the criteria for *High Competence in Teaching*, which are the hallmarks of effective teaching. Evaluation involves an assessment of each of the following factors:

- Pedagogical strategies that equitably support and engage students in learning, typically demonstrated by student evaluations of teaching and peer review;
- Successful student learning, typically demonstrated by course design, teaching materials, and/or broad evidence of student achievement; and
- Faculty growth and continuous course improvement, typically evidenced by course materials, faculty members' self-assessment, attainment of course learning outcomes, and/or involvement in professional development to strengthen teaching and mentoring.

Demonstrating *Genuine Excellence in Teaching* involves further assessment of the following additional factors, which should be considered holistically. Specifically, while each factor should be addressed, it is expected that faculty will differ in the strength of their contributions across these four factors.

- Research-based and effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the students and the discipline, typically evidenced in course materials and faculty members' self-assessment;
- Teaching and learning experiences that are designed to reflect Mason's commitment to

- diversity and inclusive excellence, typically evidenced by course design, teaching materials that incorporate diversity in the context of the discipline, broad evidence of student achievement, and/or faculty members' self-assessment;
- Work with students beyond the classroom, typically evidenced by examples of student mentoring and advising; and
 - Pedagogical leadership (e.g., for a course and/or curricular initiative) at Mason and/or within a professional community.

These criteria are relevant for and applicable to courses offered in different modalities, whether face-to-face, hybrid, fully online, or field/clinical supervision.

Moreover, to demonstrate *Genuine Excellence in Teaching*, faculty must provide evidence of significant impact of their teaching, mentoring, and other pedagogical practices beyond their own students that are consequential for pedagogic practices more generally, within and most notably beyond Mason. Demonstrating impact beyond our university for tenure-line faculty often takes the form of research and scholarship focused on pedagogy that could include peer-reviewed publications, books, monographs, instructional materials, and other media; invited and peer-reviewed presentations at professional conferences, workshops, or exhibitions; external funding for curricular development or piloting teaching methods; and/or other demonstrable exemplars of relevant research and scholarship.

Evidence for *Genuine Excellence in Teaching* must be derived from multiple sources that provide a demonstrated pattern consistent with the concept of *Genuine Excellence in Teaching* over time, noting that all faculty experience occasional challenges in the face of designing and implementing new and creative teaching approaches. External referee letters must be based on a holistic consideration of these criteria with an emphasis on impact both beyond the classroom and beyond our university.

For more information about the recommended criteria and possible evidence that can be used to demonstrate meeting these criteria, see the Summary Tables for Documenting and Assessing High Competence and Genuine Excellence in Teaching on the [Supporting Efforts to Document and Assess Teaching and Learning](#) page of the Office of the Provost website.

Tenure-line faculty who wish to earn tenure and/or promotion under the *Genuine Excellence in Teaching* must maintain a record of *High Competence* for their research, scholarship, and/or creative work.

Office of the Provost
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Judgments of Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Teaching

Consistent with the documents provided above, teaching in CEHD is seen as multifaceted, to include teaching of classes and mentoring as well as participation or leadership in other teaching-related activities such as curriculum development, accreditation tasks, and scholarship related to teaching. In

CEHD, a rating of “High Competence” is achieved by receiving average or above average student evaluations of teaching and positive peer evaluations; participating appropriately in curriculum development, assessment, and accreditation tasks; and showing evidence of versatility (in teaching assignments, mentoring and supervision, the use of innovative methods, and so forth). A rating of “Genuine Excellence” is achieved when accomplishments in the above areas are at a higher standard and provide evidence of impact beyond the classroom—specifically, course ratings must be superior, consistency and versatility must be greater, and there must be additional evidence of teaching excellence and impact. This could take a variety of forms, including increased mentoring and supervision activity, leadership in curriculum and program improvements/innovations, evidence of alumni success, scholarship of teaching, providing workshops on field of specialization to the community, presentations at national conferences related to teaching innovations, and so forth. The reflective statement from the faculty applicant should be consistent with theory and research on student learning and address how the faculty member has learned from student and colleague feedback.

Considerations for Achieving Genuine Excellence

There are several important considerations with respect to meeting the standard of *genuine excellence*.

1. One critical issue is the quality of the evidence provided to document claims of excellence. A single data point does not provide a convincing case. An example of how to provide a more compelling case would be to couple student evaluations with strong peer observation information or performance data to show that the students are meeting the course goals.
2. The focus should be on student outcomes, not just professor activities. Evidence should show, for example, how students expanded their disciplinary knowledge and/or skills, or became more willing to engage in difficult concepts, or learned new ways to approach questions. If teaching does not produce significant learning, it will not be considered excellent.
3. There also should be evidence of continued faculty learning and evolution. If there is attention to fostering learning, then teaching will necessarily evolve over time, because students themselves evolve over time. Also, genuinely excellent teachers actively seek to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their teaching.
4. Evidence for excellence in teaching ought to come from independent multiple sources which provide a pattern of data consistent with the concept of “genuine excellence” over time. Such evidence may reasonably accommodate periods of challenge and growth in the face of new and different teaching opportunities (i.e., variability in performance should be clearly linked to contextual influences).

Possible Artifacts for Inclusion

The following represent possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio of teaching accomplishments for CEHD faculty members:

Teaching of courses

- Teaching evaluations (numerical analysis per instructions)
- Peer observations

- Letters of support from students, alumni, and colleagues (solicited and unsolicited)
- Student comments (from teaching evaluations or another source) based on the whole population, not selected samples; and/or student focus groups
- Thoughtful reflection on teaching (will be sought in the teaching statement)
- Example syllabi, other course materials created by the candidate, and student work used with permission

Educational work with students outside the classroom (where applicable)

- Evidence of effective supervision of students conducting research
- Evidence of effective supervision of theses and/or dissertations as well as effective guidance provided as a member of PhD advising and dissertation committees
- Evidence of effective supervision of internships, independent studies, and field experiences (not already included in course evaluation data)
- Other effective advising and mentoring activities

Faculty leadership in promoting student learning and teaching excellence

- Examples of the development of new and successful and innovative curricula and programs, instructional materials, and/or teaching-related training programs
- Evidence of supervising and mentoring of other faculty and graduate students in relation to teaching; leading team-teaching initiatives; serving as a course leader for a program
- Revising/developing syllabi and course related materials and assessments for program improvement based on student achievement data and accreditation requirements
- Developing teaching innovations (e.g., the use of technology)
- Leading team-teaching initiatives; and/or building support for teaching-related partnerships within and across institutions

Evidence of teaching excellence across a variety of classes, e.g., large and small, face-to-face and hybrid or online, undergraduate and graduate, while maintaining a consistent and appropriate teaching load

Evidence of teaching and learning impact beyond the classroom

- conference presentations (related to teaching innovations or research on teaching)
- workshops, performances, or exhibitions
- invitations to teach at other places
- texts or teaching materials, including electronic
- articles on teaching and/or learning outcomes
- external funding for curricular development, piloting teaching methods, or advising

Aggregating Evidence to Form a Conclusion about High Competence/Genuine Excellence

Because the operational meaning of (i.e., evidence required to document) genuine excellence and high competence is dynamic and multifaceted, faculty and administrators should resist the temptation to try to quantify the teaching, research and scholarship, and service accomplishments that equate to “genuine excellence” or “high competence” in artificially precise terms. Teaching excellence can be manifested in many different ways depending on the person, context, and discipline. Extraordinary accomplishments in research and scholarship can take many forms, both within and across disciplines and academic units. Exceptional service may similarly stand out on dimensions that are more qualitative than quantitative (e.g., breadth or magnitude of impact, timeliness or uniqueness of a particular contribution, reputational consequences for the individual and Mason). This *equifinality* principle (i.e., the same end state can be reached through many different means) is at the core of what it means to celebrate (rather than punish) diversity and innovation in faculty accomplishments.

Criteria for Achieving High Competence/Genuine Excellence in Research and Scholarship

Faculty who have research as part of their assigned role are expected to engage in consequential research and scholarship on a continuous basis. Faculty who only have teaching and service assignments are still expected to engage in “scholarship of teaching” activities as appropriate to their areas of expertise and specific teaching assignments.

Provided below are relevant sections of the Faculty Handbook (2021) as well as information specific to achieving Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Research and Scholarship in CEHD, including possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio.

Faculty Handbook: 2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

2.4.2 Research and Scholarship

Scholarly achievement is demonstrated by original contributions to the advancement of the discipline/field of study, or to the integration of the discipline with other fields, or by the application of discipline- or field-based knowledge to the practice of a profession.

Examples of evidence for research and scholarship include:

- Publications (peer and non-peer reviewed), including journal articles, books, book chapters, monographs, etc.;
- Sponsored research activity and grant and contract awards;
- Conference and other scholarly presentations (peer reviewed and invited);
- Original artistic work, software and media, exhibitions, and professional performances;
- Intellectual property, patents, and evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities;
- Other evidence indicating scholarly recognition and reputation.

Judgments of Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Research and Scholarship

Evaluations of faculty accomplishments are based on holistic judgments made by integrating evidence related to quantity (productivity), quality (e.g., publication venues), impact, and developmental trajectory. High competence is awarded for good productivity and a trajectory demonstrating continuity and scholarly coherence and growth. In addition, genuine excellence requires “signature scholarly products” (i.e., things you are known for) that are of high quality and high impact, as demonstrated by favorable assessments by leaders in the field of study. For tenure-track faculty, genuine excellence is often associated with an accelerating trajectory of scholarly activity and accomplishments.

To earn a designation of high competence or genuine excellence, candidates must provide evidence of an established line of inquiry which demonstrates increasing breadth and depth over time. The accomplishments may be of a theoretical and/or applied nature, but they must be consequential and merit positive regard by experts in the field.

Criteria for genuine excellence include, but are not limited to:

- Sustained and demonstrated ability to provide leadership in the acquisition of extramural funding
- Conducting research and scholarship that has a demonstrated and substantive impact on the field as judged by experts in the field
- Recognized and replicated innovations in the conduct and delivery of research and scholarship
- Advancing the field through the development of new constructs and/or theoretical models
- Recognized expertise in the field of study among scholars, practitioners, and/or policy makers
- Participation in, and leadership of, multidisciplinary/transdisciplinary projects and initiatives

Considerations for Achieving Genuine Excellence

There are several important considerations with respect to meeting the standard of *genuine excellence*.

1. One important consideration is the quality of the evidence provided to document claims of genuine excellence. A single publication or grant, even if impressive as a stand-alone accomplishment, is insufficient. Coupling multiple publications of high impact with a pattern of strong external funding or high-visibility scholarly presentations can be convincing.
2. The evidence presented should represent accomplishments as part of a coherent plan/trajectory within the individual’s research agenda (as explained in the research & scholarship statement). For tenure-track faculty, these accomplishments should demonstrate substantial progress toward becoming a consistently productive scholar whose work is “making a difference” in terms of creating new knowledge and ideas and/or expertly addressing applied problems.
3. Another consideration is the type of venues in which publications appear and presentations are made. Research and scholarship addressed to national and international audiences will be regarded as more consequential than publications and presentations in regional and state-level venues. While collaboration is strongly valued, peer-reviewed articles in which one serves as the lead or sole author provide a particularly convincing way to demonstrate leadership and impact. Invited presentations or publications based on public acknowledgment of professional expertise

and leadership in the field of study can also provide evidence of excellence. Books, chapters, and monographs can also be used to demonstrate genuine excellence in the field of study; however, the context of these publications should be described in sufficient detail that reviewers can appropriately assess specific individual contributions as well as the quality of the publication itself. Quality might be indicated, for example, by favorable reviews, frequent citations, low acceptance rates, or adoption of a text or publication by other universities or schools/agencies.

4. Finally, external experts in the field of study will contribute to the review process for promotion and tenure. In planning, it is important to remember one's professional connection to leaders in the field (as this evolves personally). Through publications and presentations, through work in professional organizations, and through leadership in the field it is important to plan thoughtfully and strategically for professional growth from assistant professor, to associate professor, and ultimately to full professor.

If research and scholarship does not have a demonstrated significant impact it will not be deemed genuinely excellent.

Possible Artifacts for Inclusion

The following represent possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio of research and scholarship accomplishments for CEHD faculty members:

- Publishing in peer-reviewed journals recognized in the field or discipline
 - Sole author
 - Lead author
 - Collaborative
- Book/book chapters/edited book volumes that are invited based on expertise and/or peer reviews
- Publishing in non-traditional formats/venues (e.g., web-based documents, films, creative productions)
- How others have used the research and scholarship
- Ways in which professional efforts have influenced policy and programmatic decisions
- Discussion of research findings and recommendations in media (newspaper, magazine, radio, television)
- Election to prestigious national organizations that recognize excellence in a discipline
- Research awards and honors granted by professional societies, government agencies, and industry
- External research funding from sources outside the university that are peer reviewed (state, national, or international)
 - Funding for grants and contracts clearly linked to the field of study
 - The candidate's specific role in writing the proposal for funding
 - The candidate's role, activities, and accomplishments with the activities
 - Documentation of products and noteworthy accomplishments emanating from the funding
- Patents, inventions, and other such developments of a significant nature for the field or discipline

- Development of creative resources (e.g., computer-based modules, curricula, products)
- Preparation of technology-grounded or technology-infused research strategies
- Publication of scholarly research-based monographs
- Publication in peer-reviewed proceedings—international or national
- Peer-reviewed presentations in recognized conferences for the field or discipline
- Innovations in delivery of research and scholarship, building constructs and new theoretical models
 - Ways in which the research and scholarship are presented, including use of standard and cutting-edge technology
- Media attention to research and scholarship
- Citations in recognized databases
- Appointments to state, national, international commissions and/or study groups
- Invitations to present at conferences (e.g., keynote presentations based on recognized expertise)

Aggregating Evidence to Form a Conclusion about High Competence/Genuine Excellence

Because the operational meaning of (i.e., evidence required to document) genuine excellence and high competence is dynamic and multifaceted, faculty and administrators should resist the temptation to try to quantify the teaching, research and scholarship, and service accomplishments that equate to “genuine excellence” or “high competence” in artificially precise terms. Teaching excellence can be manifested in many different ways depending on the person, context, and discipline. Extraordinary accomplishments in research and scholarship can take many forms, both within and across disciplines and academic units. Exceptional service may similarly stand out on dimensions that are more qualitative than quantitative (e.g., breadth or magnitude of impact, timeliness or uniqueness of a particular contribution, reputational consequences for the individual and Mason). This *equifinality* principle (i.e., the same end state can be reached through many different means) is at the core of what it means to celebrate (rather than punish) diversity and innovation in faculty accomplishments.

Criteria for Achieving High Competence/Genuine Excellence in Service

The assigned part of a faculty job typically labeled “Service” can be separated into three distinct components: (1) *required* university service (called “citizenship” within the CEHD context); (2) university service that goes beyond minimum job requirements; and (3) professional service (which typically occurs outside the boundaries of the university).

As explained below, good citizenship is necessary to avoid an unsatisfactory performance evaluation, but it is not evidence of high competence/genuine excellence. High competence is associated with a high level of participation in university and professional service as appropriate for one’s academic rank. Genuine excellence is associated with the effective fulfillment of rank-appropriate leadership roles in university and professional service venues, especially when those roles involve a range of contributions and support the teaching and research mission of the university.

As in the areas of teaching and research and scholarship, service activities that actively promote and encourage multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives and initiatives should be given substantial weight in the evaluation process.

Faculty Handbook: 2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

2.4.3 Service

Service, which may include leadership responsibilities, is demonstrated by faculty participation in governance, and operational or development activities in the local academic unit, the University, or the profession. Required service in the local academic unit includes, but is not limited to, such activity as attendance at faculty meetings and participation in faculty personnel matters and curriculum development. Other examples of service to the LAU include student advising, developing or supporting co-curricular experiences for students, and mentoring colleagues.

Professional service is demonstrated by contributions to recognized societies and associations that promote research and scholarship and by consultancies and cooperative projects that make the faculty member's discipline or field-based knowledge and skills available to individuals, groups or agencies outside the University.

Leadership is demonstrated by making significant and consequential contributions to the local academic unit, the University, professional societies and associations, and local/regional/national/international communities. Examples include, but are not limited to, chairing or co-chairing committees for the local academic unit; leading and/or actively contributing to university-wide initiatives; serving in leadership roles for professional societies and organizations; serving in significant editorial roles; leading invited or peer-reviewed workshops; leading community-based activities related in some way to expertise; and mentoring faculty colleagues in formal programs.

Each local academic unit must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for institutional and professional leadership and engagement.

Judgments Regarding Required University Service (Citizenship)

Required Service in CEHD is defined as **Citizenship** and encompasses the following expectations:

- (1) regular attendance at appropriate program, division, and college-wide meetings;
- (2) appropriate participation in course and curriculum development;
- (3) appropriate participation in accreditation and program review functions;
- (4) appropriate participation in student advisement;
- (5) appropriate participation in program recruitment and admissions processes;
- (6) essential work with adjunct faculty (e.g., course lead); and
- (7) other program duties as assigned by program coordinators, division directors, or college administrators.

All CEHD faculty must meet minimum citizenship requirements. When minimum citizenship requirements are not met, no service points will be awarded in the annual evaluation process, resulting in an unsatisfactory evaluation in service *and* in the faculty member's overall evaluation. Faculty with unsatisfactory evaluations are not eligible for salary increases or for contract renewals. Tenured faculty

with consecutive or multiple unsatisfactory evaluations are subject to post-tenure review, which can lead to a variety of sanctions, including dismissal.

Service expectations will vary based on rank and tenure status.

Judgments Regarding University Service Beyond Minimum Requirements

In CEHD service includes significant contributions beyond required citizenship responsibilities and includes, for example, contributions such as:

At the CEHD (college/school/division/program) level:

Leadership in program curriculum development; leadership in accreditation and program review; leadership in academic advising and student services; coordination of clinical or field-based aspects of a program; leadership in professional development activities (e.g., related to teaching, research, technology, etc.); service as division director, academic program coordinator, or professor-in-charge of a specific subunit; chair/member of a college or school governance committee; chair/member of a search committee, first-tier promotion/tenure review committee, or other ad hoc committee; leadership of efforts to enhance college resources through gifts, external grants and contracts, and revenue activities; active participation in marketing, alumni relations, and school partnership activities.

At the university level:

Member/chair of governance committees (e.g., Faculty Senate), search committees or other university-level committees; task force assignments and other special assignments from central administration (e.g., HSRB); participation in university accreditation-related activities; participation in cross-unit collaborative activities and partnerships.

Judgments Regarding Professional Service

In CEHD professional service includes significant contributions to the faculty member's profession beyond the boundaries of George Mason University, and includes, for example, contributions such as:

Reviewing for professional conferences, journals and publications; serving as a member/leader in professional organizations; serving on state, national, and international committees or advisory boards; sharing expertise (e.g., through presentations) with local and regional audiences; serving as editor or assistant editor of a journal or edited volume; serving as session chair or discussant at professional meetings; advising/supporting educational organizations using professional experience and expertise.

Please note that community service unrelated to one's profession or position at George Mason University should not be included as part of a professional service portfolio. It is incumbent upon the faculty to make the case for seemingly unrelated items.

Aggregating Evidence to Form a Conclusion about High Competence/Genuine Excellence

Because the operational meaning of (i.e., evidence required to document) genuine excellence and high competence is dynamic and multifaceted, faculty and administrators should resist the temptation to try to quantify the teaching, research and scholarship, and service accomplishments that equate to "genuine excellence" or "high competence" in artificially precise terms. Teaching excellence can be

manifested in many different ways depending on the person, context, and discipline. Extraordinary accomplishments in research and scholarship can take many forms, both within and across disciplines and academic units. Exceptional service may similarly stand out on dimensions that are more qualitative than quantitative (e.g., breadth or magnitude of impact, timeliness or uniqueness of a particular contribution, reputational consequences for the individual and Mason). This *equifinality* principle (i.e., the same end state can be reached through many different means) is at the core of what it means to celebrate (rather than punish) diversity and innovation in faculty accomplishments.