

Information and Communication Studies Program
College of Information and Communications
University of South Carolina

Professional-Track Faculty Promotion Criteria and Procedures

University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty Approval Date: April 10, 2026

See final page for faculty revision and approvals history

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Information and Communication Studies is a unit within the College of Information and Communications that hosts interdisciplinary programs. The unit focuses on the comprehensive study of information and communication spanning information studies, information integrity, human communication, social and political applications of information and communications, and public communication. As such, this unit will enable the College to develop and provide interdisciplinary content and degrees that bridge curricular gaps between information and communication. This unit is not a tenure home but can house professional-track faculty.

I. Professional-Track Faculty

The purpose of these guidelines is to define and differentiate professional-track faculty position titles and provide criteria and procedures for evaluation and promotion. All professional-track faculty are integral members of the College of Information and Communications (CIC) and play an essential role in its development and operation. They commit significant efforts to instructional, research, and/or professional service activities and administrative responsibilities related to the CIC's educational outreach missions. They may be assigned by the director of Information and Communication Studies (iCOM) to engage in a variety of different kinds of scholarship and service activities, to be specified by individual appointment letters and contracts. The focus of the professional-track faculty member's contribution (percentage of

effort) will be determined by the unit director and the dean, and delineated in the letter of appointment. Instructional and research faculty will be evaluated based upon the success with which this distribution of effort is achieved, according to the guidelines for promotion below.

II. Professional-Track Instructional Faculty Positions and Ranks

The iCOM unit complies with the following university policies: ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty, ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions, ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty, and the Columbia Faculty Manual. Accordingly, the position titles and ranks are as follows:

- Instructor, Senior Instructor, and Principal Instructor
- Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, and Teaching Professor
- Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor

The possible promotions are:

Instructor to Senior Instructor

Senior Instructor to Principal Instructor

Teaching Assistant Professor to Teaching Associate Professor

Teaching Associate Professor to Teaching Professor

Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor

Research Associate Professor to Research Professor

Instructor to Senior Instructor

An Instructor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Senior Instructor if they have at least five years of full-time teaching experience with at least three years at USC and achieve a rating of Excellent in their primary area of effort, typically teaching, and at least Good in the other(s).

Senior Instructor to Principal Instructor

A Senior Instructor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Principal Instructor if they have at least nine years of full-time teaching experience in higher education and achieve a rating of Excellent in all areas of responsibility.

Teaching Assistant Professor to Teaching Associate Professor

A Teaching Assistant Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Teaching Associate Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in academic, instructional, and/or professional

achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent in their primary area of effort (teaching), and at least Good in the other(s) (research, or service). There should also be evidence of progress toward establishing a regional or national reputation in their field.

Teaching Associate Professor to Teaching Professor

A Teaching Associate Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Teaching Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in academic, instructional, and/or professional achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent in all areas of responsibility. There should also be evidence of a regional or national stature in their field.

Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor

A Research Assistant Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Research Associate Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in research achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent in their primary area of effort (research) and at least Good in any other area(s). There should also be evidence of progress toward establishing a regional, national or international reputation in their field.

Research Associate Professor to Research Professor

A Research Associate Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Research Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, established a national/international reputation of excellence in research, and a rating of Excellent in all areas of responsibility. There should also be evidence of a national or international stature in their field.

III. Evidence of Accomplishments and Performance Standards for Promotion of Professional-Track Faculty

iCOM uses the following guidelines related to teaching, research, and service to lead to a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of candidates for promotion. The unit adheres to the promotion procedures delineated in the Faculty Manual.

All professional-track faculty who have completed the minimum time in rank specified in both the Faculty Manual and this policy, and who have met these unit criteria for rank advancement, can be considered for promotion. The procedures outlined below are for evaluation of teaching, service, and research are below.

A. Teaching

A record of sustained effective performance in the area of teaching is required of all professional-track instructional faculty members. Teaching includes a full range of activities engaged in by the faculty member, such as regularly scheduled classes – whether face-to-face, distance, blended, or other pedagogically sound approaches, one-to-one independent studies, advising, supervision of student research studies, supervision of internships and service learning experiences, service on undergraduate, master's or doctoral thesis/dissertations, preparation of instructional materials, design of new courses, and other curriculum development work. Evaluation of teaching is fully described below.

Evidence and Evaluation:

- Student evaluations from every course taught during their time in the current rank, or since the last promotion will be examined to determine the degree to which students judge faculty as effective in instruction. A summary assessment of this teaching will be prepared by the Chair of the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty or another member of the Committee. The summary assessment of teaching is based on the required sources (e.g., student evaluations and peer reviews of teaching) and any additional documentation the candidate chooses to provide. The teaching summary writer does a comprehensive review of the candidate's teaching, and this review is vetted and approved by the promotional committee. The summary should include comparative data from other sections of multi-section courses and from the same, or when applicable, comparable courses taught by other faculty members in the recent past. This document will clearly explain the student evaluation process, evaluation system, and provide an overall rating of teaching in keeping with the definitions of rating of teaching given above.
- Peer reviews of teaching prior to promotion to at least Senior Instructor or Teaching Associate Professor will be given consideration in judging teaching effectiveness. Peer evaluations are conducted annually for Instructors and Teaching Assistant Professors and at least once for promotion to all other ranks by the unit's Professional-Track faculty committee.
- Candidate's teaching statement.

Whereas no candidate is expected to have achievements in all areas, teaching effectiveness can be further indicated by:

- Supervision of student internships and/or service-learning contributions
- Direction of student research at undergraduate, master's, or doctoral levels and membership on thesis or dissertation committees
- Mentorship contributing to receipt of student awards and/or honors
- Supervision of student work leading to presentation and/or publication
- Receipt of teaching awards, fellowships, and other recognition
- Receipt of peer-reviewed teaching-related grants and support

- Adoption of teaching resources by other universities
- Evidence-based or theory-based publications on teaching or student learning
- Membership in international educational networks
- Course/curriculum/program development and/or innovation evidence
- Requests to instruct seminar sessions for academic or professional associations
- Requests to serve as a visiting instructor or guest lecturer at another institution
- Attendee evaluations from professional development workshops
- Other feedback from colleagues, students, alumni, in the form of solicited letters of input

Ratings:

- Outstanding: The candidate's teaching consistently receives high student course evaluations and exceeds the excellent level through evidence of several noteworthy accomplishments and contributions, such as significant mentorship roles, impactful curricular design, external teaching engagements, awards for teaching, etc.; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as outstanding; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show exceptional evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.
- Excellent: The candidate's teaching consistently receives high student course evaluations; consistently receives a rating of excellent on peer evaluations; noteworthy accomplishments and contributions, such as significant mentorship roles, impactful curricular design, external teaching engagements, awards for teaching, etc.; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as excellent; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show a variety of evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.
- Good: The candidate's teaching meets base level expectations, and the candidate generally receives overall positive student course evaluations; generally receives at least a rating of good on peer evaluations; such as significant mentorship roles, impactful curricular design, external teaching engagements, awards for teaching, etc.; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as good; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show some evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.
- Fair: The candidate's teaching meets base level expectations, and the candidate's student course evaluations are only occasionally positive; occasionally receives at least a rating of fair on peer evaluations; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as fair; overall evaluation of

course materials and teaching activities show little evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.

- Unacceptable: The candidate's teaching does not meet base level expectations, and the candidate consistently receives student course evaluations that are not positive; consistently receives peer evaluations that are rated as unacceptable; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as unsatisfactory; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities shows no evidence of engagement or development beyond teaching assigned courses.

B. Professional Engagement and Service

A record of sustained and effective service is required of professional-track faculty, as specified in distribution of effort in the appointment letter and contract. The unit encourages an increasing level of responsibility and leadership with increasing rank. Individuals are expected to make contributions in the area of service to the unit, College, University, the profession, and larger society (at the community, state, national and/or international levels). Service includes participation and service on unit, School, College, and University committees, task forces, and related activities; election, service or leadership related to professional organizations in communication, information, or closely related fields; non-research-based consulting, presentation of seminars, workshops, and continuing education events; administrative duties, and application of professional expertise with community groups. Evaluation of service is fully described below.

Evaluation of Service

Definition of Service:

- Administrative roles and responsibilities in service to the unit, a School within the College, the College, and/or the University
- Review of manuscripts for academic or professional journals
- Review of papers for academic or professional conferences
- Review of grant proposals for internal and external funding agencies
- Editorial positions on scholarly and professional journals
- Participation in and leadership of the unit, a School within the College, the College, and/or University committees, task forces, and related groups
- Participation in and leadership of professional and/or scholarly organizations communication, information, or closely related fields, special interest groups, task forces, conferences, etc.
- Non-research-based consulting, presentation of seminars, workshops, and

continuing education events

- Non-research application of professional expertise with community groups
- Non-research-based community engagement and outreach
- Receipt of service grants, honors, and awards
- Organizing meetings, symposia, conferences, and workshops

Evidence and Evaluation:

The candidate's service record will be evaluated on the degree and quality of professional activity and service locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The degree and quality of service to the unit, a School within the College, College, and University's faculty governance structure will also be evaluated. Service efforts that positively impact teaching and/or research are particularly valued. Evidence includes:

- The service record as documented by the candidate's dossier and personal statement
- Letters of appointment and/or support from colleagues indicating the nature of the service contributions
- Other documentation of contributions or products that are generated through the service activity

Ratings:

Outstanding: Candidate's record shows an exceptionally high level and quality of service in at least two of the following areas: unit, School within the College, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community, and candidate has taken on a leadership role such as committee chair or has initiated new service projects.

Excellent: Candidate's record shows a high level and quality of service in at least two of the following areas: unit, School within the College, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Good: Candidate's record shows a high level and quality of service in one of the following areas: unit, School within the College, School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Fair: Candidate's record shows an adequate level and quality of service in one of the following areas: unit, School within the College, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Unacceptable: Candidate's record shows an inadequate level and quality of service in all of the following areas: unit, School within the College, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

C. Research

The College of Information and Communications values as scholarship both the generation of new knowledge and the dissemination of existing knowledge in ways that significantly inform and shape professional practice. Solo scholarship and collaboration (with colleagues inside and outside of the CIC, USC, and with students) are both highly valued. The following items (not in order of significance) constitute research and/or scholarship, although candidacy need not be supported by all items listed: articles, chapters, books, or monographs which are in progress or under review for publication; preparation and submission of high-quality proposals for funding, even if these are not yet funded; and citation of candidate's work by other scholars. Evaluation of research is fully described below.

Evaluation of Research

Definition of Research:

Research includes the intellectual activities that contribute to the development and dissemination of the knowledge base of the fields of communication, information science, and journalism and mass communications. The scope and interdisciplinarity of the information and communications fields leads researchers to draw upon qualitative, quantitative, mixed, historical, and other methodologies appropriate to specific inquiries. Research can be demonstrated by ability to:

- Investigate questions with appropriate methodological technique and rigor
- Conceptualize and theorize in an original way
- Synthesize, criticize, and clarify extant knowledge and research
- Innovate in the collection or analysis of empirical data
- Relate findings to the solution of practical problems of individuals, groups, organizations (e.g., libraries, schools, communities, government agencies, media, and corporations), or society
- Produce or interpret artifacts (e.g. new statistical methods, programs, media, or texts)
- Disseminate the results of scholarly inquiry through publication, presentation, performance, and other means of communication not limited by format or intended audience

The University of South Carolina is recognized proudly as a community engaged university according to Carnegie classifications. Even though peer-reviewed publications and extramural funding shall receive greatest prioritization, translating research to communities can be an important aspect of one's research agenda. The translation and dissemination of findings that are tied to the faculty member's special field of scholarship, which can create venues for community outreach and engagement, may be included in the definition of research. As scholars engage in community outreach, they will disseminate promising innovations to appropriate audiences and subject their work to critical review.

Evidence and Evaluation:

The candidate's record will be evaluated on the overall significance, contribution, and impact made to their disciplines and professions through independent and collaborative research. Since the relative importance of different types of research products and order of authorship will vary depending on the candidate's subdiscipline within, the personal statement should contextualize the candidate's research within their subdiscipline's customary markers of significance, impact, and quality and explain levels of involvement and contribution in collaborative projects. The College of Communication and Information also recognizes that particular methodological approaches may impact the rate of publication. Evidence includes:

- Peer-reviewed publications or juried presentation.
- Editorially reviewed publications or presentations
- Invited publications, or presentations in recognition of scholarly productivity or expertise
- Publication of textbook chapters, reviews, or writing/editing whole textbooks; evidence-based or theory-based publications on pedagogy
- Other publications reflecting scholarship and expertise (e.g., technical reports, reports to government, professional standards, white papers, evaluations, assessment tools, podcasts, etc.)
- Evidence of publication venue quality such as journal impact factors, journal or conference acceptance rates, or other measures of impact and quality
- Evidence of impact, visibility, and professional status such as total citations, h-index, g-index, i10-index, alt-metrics, reviews, awards, media coverage, and other forms of recognition of the quality of publication or production
- Grant proposals, with funded proposals having a higher standing
- Evaluation of research quality and impact by external reviewers
- Research projects in progress or under review
- Evidence of contributions to theoretical, conceptual, and/or methodological development, influence on pedagogy or professional practice, or application of innovative approaches to research problems
- Expert witness
- Awards for research-based publications and activities
- Other evidence of scholarly activity, which the candidate offers for consideration or by request of the unit director

Ratings:

- Outstanding: The candidate's record of research is of such a high quantity and quality that a regional, national and/or international reputation is evident. For faculty seeking promotion to professor, the national and/or international reputation is one of preeminence—that means being recognized broadly as a

foremost authority in an area of research. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate the substantial influence of the candidate's scholarship on their discipline. The evaluations by external referees note the outstanding quality, significance, and impact of the candidate's research record.

- Excellent: The candidate's record of research reflects a high level of quantity and quality, and the achievement of a regional, national and/or international reputation is likely. For faculty seeking promotion to professor, the regional, national and/or international reputation is evident—that means being recognized as an established researcher in a specific area. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate the increasing influence of the candidate's scholarship on their discipline. The evaluations by external referees recognize the quality of the candidate's work and the likelihood that they will have a significant impact on their field of specialization.
- Good: The candidate's record of research reflects a consistent level of quantity and quality, and there is the potential for achievement of a regional, national and/or international reputation. For faculty seeking promotion to professor, the regional, national and/or international reputation is present. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate a moderate degree of influence of the candidate's scholarship on their discipline. The evaluations by external referees generally attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.
- Fair: The candidate's record of research meets base level expectations. The candidate's record of research reflects an inconsistent level of quantity and quality and does not clearly show the potential for achievement of a regional, national and/or international reputation. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate a minimal degree of influence of the candidate's scholarship on their discipline. For faculty seeking promotion to professor, progress in research, while minimal research has been made since obtaining rank of associate professor. The evaluations by external referees minimally attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.
- Unacceptable: The candidate's record of research is of low quantity and quality and shows little or no potential for achievement of a regional, national and/or international reputation or little or no advancement beyond the level achieved since obtaining rank of associate professor. Indicators and evidence of impact do not demonstrate an influence of the candidate's scholarship on their discipline. The evaluations by external referees do not attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.

Use of Outside Referees

All application files of person seeking promotion as research faculty will contain at least three evaluations of the candidate's file by impartial scholars at peer or aspirant institutions

within their respective field (communication, information science, journalism and mass communications). A person who is a leading scholar in their field may be used as an outside evaluator if they are at an institution that is not peer or aspirant. A non-university specialist may be used as an outside evaluator if their expertise is particularly relevant. Faculty serving as outside evaluators should hold a higher rank than the candidate under review. The external reviewers should not include individuals who were former instructors of the candidate, dissertation directors, coauthors, colleagues with whom the candidate has served at other institutions or who were fellow students with the candidate at the same institution, or where there may be some other conflict of interest.

The chair of the unit's Professional-Track Faculty Committee, with the advice of other members of the Committee and the director, will select enough outside referees to ensure that at least three evaluations are received. All outside evaluators will be asked to disclose any relationship or interaction with the candidate. The Chair will handle all communications with the outside referees using the letter recommended by the University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty and will add the referees' evaluations to the candidate's file for review.

IV. Procedures for Applying for Promotion

The iCOM unit will follow university-wide deadlines as well as provost specifications for how files are to be organized and submitted for Professional-Track Faculty Promotions and ensure that the deadlines are communicated to the faculty well in advance.

For promotion of professional-track faculty to the next successive rank, it would normally be expected that the candidate is in at least their fifth year in rank. The following procedures will be followed:

1. The unit's Committee on Professional-Track Faculty (the Committee) will be composed of six faculty members appointed by the unit director (four at senior instructor or teaching or research associate professor or above, and two tenured faculty members). When there are fewer professional-track faculty members in the unit available to serve, or when the professional-track faculty are not at the appropriate rank, faculty members in other units will serve in their stead. In matters of promotion, voting members of the Committee are all those faculty members of higher rank. The director of the unit is not eligible to vote or to serve on the committee, though the director will participate in meetings of the Committee in an advisory role when possible. The chair of the Committee will be elected in a meeting of the Committee by April 1st of each year for a one-year term that will extend from the ensuing April 15 to April 14, by a majority vote of the members of that Committee. All members of the Committee are eligible to vote for candidates for chair.

2. By October 1, the director will solicit from all eligible professional-track faculty whether or not they intend to seek promotion.

3. By October 15, a faculty member who intends to apply for promotion must provide written notification to the director. The director will then provide the dean and the Committee the names of professional track faculty members applying for promotion. The dean's office will submit the names to the provost online by November 5.

4. By October 31 of each year, the Committee will meet with applying faculty and provide an orientation to the application and review process as well as familiarize them with the calendar for the year.

5. By December 1, a faculty member seeking promotion will submit a dossier demonstrating and documenting how current performance criteria for promotion to the next rank have been met.

6. The complete dossier including the statement assessing the teaching record will be reviewed by the Committee. Each Committee member will vote by confidential ballot with justifications whether to recommend promotion. The Committee adheres to the following procedure for determining whether an affirmative recommendation on an application will be made to the director:

A majority affirmative recommendation on an application for promotion is achieved when at least fifty-one percent of all those eligible committee members have cast a "yes" ballot on the candidate's application for promotion. Eligible members of the committee who cast an "abstain" ballot are not counted for purposes of determining whether a majority affirmative recommendation has been achieved. The Faculty Manual notes that written justification of all votes at the unit level is mandatory and this justification will state specifically how the candidate meets or does not meet the unit's criteria.

By March 1, the Committee will forward the dossier along with the ballots and justifications to the director who will make a recommendation in support of or against the promotion and draft an accompanying letter. The director shall forward their vote with written justification, along with all other recommendations, statements, and endorsements to the dean. Promotion is recommended by the dean who will submit the file to the Office of the Provost no later than May 1. Promotions shall be approved by the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

Faculty Revision and Approvals History

REVISION OF February 13, 2025