

Institute for Southern Studies
McCausland College of Arts and Sciences
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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PREAMBLE

The Institute for Southern Studies (ISS) exists to explore, examine, and explain the American South through a strongly interdisciplinary lens. We engage in public outreach and programming, scholarship, research, and in a robust undergraduate program marked by a tradition of excellent teaching. While our faculty include tenured faculty with dual appointments, we rely on the contributions of professional track faculty members (PTFs) for the majority of our teaching. The following explains the criteria and procedures for the evaluation and promotion of PTFs in ISS.

Conflict of Interest Statement: A **conflict of interest** will be deemed to exist between the candidate and a faculty member if the committee member was a master's, doctoral, or postdoctoral advisor of the candidate; and/or the committee member is or has been a member of the candidate's immediate family or lives in the same household. **If a faculty member has a conflict of interest, then they must recuse themselves from participating in and voting on the file being considered for promotion.**

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIC GUIDELINES

ISS holds to evaluation and promotion criteria and procedures largely commensurate with those of other units in the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences, but with two important distinctions due to ISS's status as an Institute (not a Department) and small size:

- A 4:4 teaching load or equivalent is the standard for professional track faculty appointments; however, some faculty may have separate appointments for administrative duties that would reduce this load. Because of the small size, ISS PTF typically blend teaching with substantial administrative or other duties.
- ISS typically, though not always, hires PTF through joint hires with another campus unit.

Duties and responsibilities are to be clearly delineated in individual contracts or, in the case of jointly-hired PTFs, the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between ISS and the other unit.

Promotion files for PTF will reflect the agreement outlined in the faculty contract and, when appropriate, the MOU, in accordance with the Faculty Manual. The weights of a faculty member's teaching, administrative, and other duties will be outlined in the faculty contract/MOU. Evaluations of the faculty member will be conducted in respect of these weights.

While ISS PTFs are not hired in a research capacity, quality research will be assessed positively in the context of furthering and strengthening the member's teaching as part of the promotion file.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR JOINT HIRES

- The foundational documents for evaluating jointly appointed PTF in ISS are the memorandum of Understanding (MOU) made between ISS and the program/department/school with which ISS made the hire and the employment contracts for the PTF over the period of review.

- In any joint hire, the MOU will clearly delineate which unit is the *primary* unit of hire and which is the secondary unit. The faculty member's obligations to both the primary and the secondary unit will be clearly differentiated.
- For purposes of promotion in cases where ISS is the secondary unit, ISS will provide the primary unit with its evaluation and recommendation for the faculty member. The ultimate decision on promotion will reside with the primary unit.

PROFESSIONAL TRACK FACULTY RANKS

ISS hires both *instructors* and *teaching professors* as professional-track faculty at the following ranks:

INSTRUCTORS

These professional-track faculty members are primarily tasked with teaching and secondarily with administrative and service work, with specific weights of each task outlined in their contracts or the MOU with the faculty member's other unit of hire.

- **Instructors** have a master's degree in the teaching discipline, with a minimum of 18 hours of graduate work in the teaching discipline.
- **Senior Instructors** have a master's degree in teaching discipline, with a minimum of 18 hours of graduate work in the teaching discipline; in addition, they have at least *five years of experience* in full-time teaching of the discipline at the college/university level. After the completion of five years of full-time teaching at the rank of instructor, with at least one year in the Institute for Southern Studies, an instructor may apply for promotion to senior instructor.
- **Principal Instructors** have a master's degree in teaching discipline, with a minimum of 18 hours of graduate work in the teaching discipline; in addition, they have at least *nine years of experience* in full-time teaching of the discipline at the college/university level. After the completion of nine years of full-time teaching at the rank of senior instructor, with at least four years in the Institute for Southern Studies, a senior instructor may apply for promotion to principal instructor.

TEACHING PROFESSORS

These professional-track faculty members are tasked with teaching, student mentorship, and administrative and service work, with specific weights of each task outlined in their contracts or the MOU with the faculty member's other unit of hire.

- **Teaching Assistant Professors** have a terminal degree, typically an earned doctorate, and demonstrate strong potential for development as an instructor and student mentor.
- **Teaching Associate Professors** have a terminal degree, typically an earned doctorate; in addition, they have at least *five years of effective, relevant experience* in full-time teaching of the discipline at the college/university level and in relevant administrative work and student mentorship. One year must be at USC.
- **Teaching Professors** have a terminal degree, typically an earned doctorate; in addition, they have at least *nine years of effective, relevant experience* in full-time teaching of the discipline at the college/university level and in relevant administrative work and student mentorship. One

year must be at USC. This rank is reserved for individuals with a proven stature in instructional roles and shall require, at a minimum, evidence of excellence in all areas of responsibility.

ASSESSMENT LEVELS:

ISS PTFs will be assessed in all aspects of the work assigned to them per their contracts/MOUs at the levels *outstanding*, *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, and *unacceptable*, which are defined as follows, consistent with these terms' usage in the Faculty Manual:

- *Outstanding*: duties performed far above the minimum effective level.
- *Excellent*: duties performed significantly above the minimum effective level.
- *Good*: duties performed slightly above the minimum effective level.
- *Fair*: duties performed at the minimum effective level.
- *Unacceptable*: duties performed below the minimum effective level.

RATING CRITERIA

I) TEACHING

- *Unacceptable* teaching performance falls below the level of teaching competence. Evidence of incompetent teaching includes a pattern of failing in one's basic teaching duties, for instance, failing to attend class without notice, failing to grade and return student in a reasonable timeframe, or inappropriate and/or unprofessional behavior toward students.
- *Fair* teaching performance meets, but does not exceed, the basic level of teaching competence. The basic level of teaching competence occurs when a faculty member's teaching, assessments, and overall course management provides an environment in which students can reasonably fulfill the course learning outcomes. Student and peer evaluations will be part of the evidence used to determine whether this basic level is met.
- *Good* teaching performance meets and exceeds the basic level of teaching competence. In addition to evidence of teaching competence, good teaching displays evidence of quality teaching beyond a competent level, along with aspects indicating room for improvement. Good teaching performance may include a few qualities associated with excellent teaching, which are described below. Student and peer evaluations will be part of the evidence used to identify aspects of teaching that exceed basic competence and aspects that require improvement.
- *Excellent* teaching performance meets and exceeds the basic level of teaching competence and consistently possesses many qualities of excellent teaching. Qualities of excellent teaching may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Revising courses and pedagogical practices in response to assessments
 - Highly effective classroom management or performance
 - High levels of student engagement
 - Innovative teaching practices
 - Using varied teaching strategies
 - Peer-reviewed publications that add new knowledge taught in the classroom

- Successful acquisition of funding for the development of new or the improvement of existing teaching infrastructure or approaches
- Integration of beyond-the-classroom experiences or service learning with coursework
- *Outstanding* teaching performance meets the criteria for excellent teaching performance and displays one or more qualities of exceptional teaching. Qualities of exceptional teaching may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Winning teaching awards or honors
 - Achieving a certification through USC's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) (e.g., on classroom instruction or inclusive practices) and then implementing practices from the training in teaching
 - Successful development of new or improved teaching infrastructure, curriculum, or approaches
 - Publications or conference presentations of education-based research and/or pedagogy
 - Student or peer evaluations indicating a level of teaching likely to have a strong impact on academic and professional careers of students
 - Service that has a high impact on the teaching quality and capacity of the Department

Student and peer evaluations, as well as the PTF's summary of teaching, will be used to determine the teaching rating.

II) ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE

Beyond the administrative work explicitly denoted in contracts/MOUs, PFTs are also expected to engage in service commensurate with the level outlined in their contracts/MOUs. Service will often, but not exclusively, occur in participation on committees or other groups sponsored by ISS, the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences, or the University. Awards/honors for service and administrative activities will also be considered to help determine this rating.

Beyond the expected administrative work outlined in a PTF's contract/MOU, service activities include, but are not limited to, the following or similar activities:

- Service on departmental, college, or university committees or groups
- Community engagement
- Service in professional teaching organizations
- Mentoring of the professional development of colleagues
- Supervision of student organizations
- Editorship of journals, proceedings, etc.
- Organization of Symposia and Conferences
- Advisory services to other academic institutions

Administration and Service Ratings:

- *Unacceptable* administrative work/service occurs when a faculty member fails to perform the administrative tasks outlined in the contract/MOU and fails to engage in even a small amount of service.
- *Fair* administrative work/service occurs when a faculty member performance occurs when a faculty member fulfills the administrative tasks outlined in the contract/MOU and makes small contributions to service.
- *Good* administrative work/service occurs when a faculty member fulfills the administrative tasks outlined in the contract/MOU and makes moderate contributions to service.
- *Excellent* administrative work/service occurs when a faculty member fulfills the administrative tasks outlined in the contract/MOU and makes substantial contributions to service.
- *Outstanding* administrative work/service occurs when a faculty member fulfills the administrative tasks outlined in the contract/MOU and makes exceptional contributions to service.

III) MENTORING

For PTFs on the teaching professor track, student mentorship is a part of their required workload and is specified in their contract/MOU. For PTFs on the instructor track, mentorship is not an expected part of their workload but can be considered towards their overall rating.

Faculty summary of mentoring activities will be part of the evidence used to determine mentoring ratings. Student outcomes and awards/honors for mentoring can be part of the evidence used to determine this rating.

Mentoring activities include the following or similar activities:

- Successful direction of undergraduate theses and/or research projects
- Successful direction of graduate student research as advisor or second reader
- Supervision of honors or master's theses
- Independent study courses
- Assisting students in applying for grants for student research or scholarship
- Co-authoring scholarly work with students
- Assisting students in preparing materials for graduate school applications
- Helping students apply for awards or recognition
- Nominating students to win awards or recognition
- Engagement in organizing student-oriented events
- Outreach to elementary/middle/high school students to promote the study of the South
- Outreach to students from underrepresented groups
- Participation in career fairs
- Recruitment of students into Southern Studies courses

- Achieving a certification through USC's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) or other organization focused on skills needed for mentoring
- Providing feedback on writing that goes beyond the ordinary grading, for instance, helping a student to prepare a paper for submission to a conference or for publication

Mentoring Performance Ratings

- *Unacceptable* mentoring performance falls below the level of mentoring competence. Evidence of incompetent mentoring includes a pattern of failing in one's basic mentoring duties, for instance, failing to engage in even a small amount of mentoring, or discouraging students that inquire about possible mentoring relationships.
- *Fair* mentoring performance occurs when a faculty member makes only small mentoring contributions and the faculty member is approachable when students inquire about possible mentoring relationships.
- *Good* mentoring performance occurs when a faculty member makes moderate mentoring contributions and the faculty member is approachable when students inquire about possible mentoring relationships.
- *Excellent* mentoring performance occurs when a faculty member's mentoring contributions are substantial and the faculty member is approachable when students inquire about possible mentoring relationships.
- *Outstanding* mentoring performance occurs when a faculty member's mentoring contributions are substantial and the faculty member conducts substantial outreach to students about possible mentoring relationships.

PROMOTION

Promotion Eligibility

Each year the Office of the Dean will notify all professional track-faculty and their respective unit heads of the opportunity to submit their files for promotion. Written notification will include the promotion review calendar.

Promotion eligibility is governed by University Policy ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions.

Promotion File Submission

1. Each PTF member pursuing promotion will submit a promotion file to the unit head containing the documents requested by the Office of the Provost by the date indicated by the Office of the Dean's schedule for promotion of professional-track faculty.
2. The promotion files should be assembled according to the type and rank of the position, as outlined below.

Promotion File Review

- Professional-Track Faculty Promotion Review Committee: At a specially-called faculty meeting, ISS faculty will, by show of hands, vote on a three-person PTF review committee to review the faculty member's promotion file and recommend a decision on the promotion request. This committee should include at least one professional-track faculty member above the present rank of the candidate(s) under review. If the unit does not have an appropriately ranked professional-track faculty member for this service, a suitable substitute from another unit may be asked to serve on the committee, in consultation with the unit Associate Dean.
- A faculty member of higher rank will serve as Review Committee Chair. For purposes of the committee's work, Senior Instructors, Teaching Associate Professors, and tenured Associate Professors are of equivalent rank, and Principal Instructors, Teaching Professors, and tenured Full Professors are of equivalent rank. In the case of the same rank, the faculty member with the longer period of service as USC faculty will serve as Chair. In the event that this is also equal, the Committee members will choose the chair from among themselves.
- The Review Committee Chair, as appropriate, will add the following materials to the file and provide copies of the file to the promotion review committee:
 - A summary of the courses taught by the candidate since the last promotion review. This summary will also provide a comprehensive review of teaching activity for the review period, including peer and student evaluations.
 - Summary of administrative or other duties as defined by the candidate's contract or MOU
 - External reviews are not required for the promotion process.

Promotion Review Committee review and recommendation should follow the procedures outlined in the unit criteria.

Promotion Criteria

For candidates for promotion on the *instructor* track, the Committee will review the candidate's promotion file in two areas: teaching and administrative duties/service. For candidates in the *teaching professor* track, the Committee will review the candidate's promotion file in three areas: teaching, administrative duties/service, and mentorship.

The Committee will use the Rating Criteria (see above) in assessing the candidate:

- **Teaching.** Based on student evaluations, peer reviews of teaching, and other documentation related to the candidate's teaching, each committee member will assess the candidate as outstanding, excellent, good, fair, or unacceptable.
- **Administrative Duties/Service.** Each committee member will review the candidate's summary of service and administrative duties in relation to the duties outlined in the candidate's contract/MOU, and assess the candidate's performance as outstanding, excellent, good, fair, or unacceptable.
- **Mentorship.** If applicable, each committee member will review the candidate's summary of mentoring activities and assess the candidate's mentorship as outstanding, excellent, good, fair, or unacceptable.

Committee members should keep in mind the following guidelines:

- For promotion from **instructor** to **senior instructor** or **teaching assistant professor** to **teaching associate professor**, teaching must be at least *excellent* and administrative duties/service (and mentorship, if applicable) at least *good* or better.
- For promotion from **senior instructor** to **principal instructor**, teaching must be at least *excellent* and administrative duties/service and mentoring (as appropriate) at least *good* or better. For promotion from **teaching associate professor** to **teaching professor**, all areas of responsibility—teaching, administrative duties/service, and mentoring—must be at the level of *excellent* or above.

Voting and Recommendation

1. The Review Committee Chair will provide access to the complete file including the review committee recommendation, if applicable, to the Institute's voting faculty, at eligible rank, for review as defined by the unit criteria, along with the unit Promotion Form.

Each faculty member eligible to vote shall vote "yes" or "no" or "abstain," and include written justification for how the candidate meets or does not meet the unit's criteria. Abstentions will be noted but not considered in the final vote count; that is, they will not count for nor against the candidate.

The unit recommendation for promotion will be based on a simple majority vote by unit faculty of appropriate rank, including at least one professional track faculty member. Noting the small size of ISS, it may be necessary for the ISS Director to recruit faculty members from other units to meet the minimum of five faculty members of appropriate rank needed to vote on promotion.

2. The Director of the Institute will make a recommendation on whether the candidate should be promoted. The candidate will be notified in writing of the Director's recommendation.

3. Affirmative Recommendation

The Director will send the promotion file to the Dean of the McCausland College of Arts and Sciences. The Dean will review the file and will forward it to the Office of the Provost with a recommendation. The final decision on promotion is made by the Office of the Provost.

4. Negative Recommendation

A candidate may seek recourse for a negative recommendation by requesting a discussion with the Director and the Review Committee. If the Director's recommendation remains negative following the discussion, the candidate may request in writing that the promotion file be sent forward. In such a case, the Director shall send that candidate's file to the Dean. The Dean will review the file and will forward it to the Office of the Provost with a recommendation. The final decision on promotion is made by the Office of the Provost.

FACULTY REVISION AND APPROVALS HISTORY

Faculty Voting on Approval: Mark Smith, Emily R. Allen, W. Matthew J. Simmons

Unit Approval Date: April 2025