

Suggestions and Sample Language for Annual Evaluation Letters:

Overview

Annual Evaluation letters are required components of the ASPT process and are opportunities to recognize faculty for their contributions, to provide feedback they can use to be more productive, and to document their performance record in support of justifying significant rewards or, when necessary, consequences for poor or inappropriate performance.

Most Departments/Schools (if not all) have developed standard approaches to the annual evaluation letter that are consistent with University policies and reflect the local policies and culture. This resource is intended to provide suggestions that might be useful if a Department/school wishes to refresh their approach, update their local guidelines, or address unusual circumstances for which they might not have a good model.

Suggested language that you can incorporate into annual evaluation letters are presented in *italics*.

Introductory Material

Like any effective piece of prose, an annual evaluation letter should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. A standard introductory paragraph can include the following information:

- The evaluation is required by policy
- The evaluation is used for potential salary increases
- A specification of the evaluation period
- Reference to the faculty member's assigned duties (e.g., %ages)
- Brief summary of the DFSC/SFSC process, including any rating scales or defined qualitative markers (e.g., "outstanding" or "below expectations")

Overall Evaluation

ASPT Policy requires that each faculty member be given an overall evaluation of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." Department/school guidelines provide the definition of "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" for each unit. We recommend that the overall evaluation be communicated early in the letter. While there is no required wording or format, the following samples may be helpful; feel free to adapt to make phrasing consistent with unit culture/guidelines.

Satisfactory Performance:

*I am pleased to inform you that your overall evaluation for the 2015 calendar year is **satisfactory**. The remainder of this letter summarizes the DFSC/SFSC evaluation of your contributions and activity in each area of your assignment.*

Unsatisfactory Performance

*It is my obligation to inform you that your overall evaluation for the 2015 calendar year is **unsatisfactory**. The remainder of this letter summarizes the DFSC/SFSC evaluation of your contributions and activity in each area of your assignment.*

Contributions in Teaching, Scholarly/Creative Productivity, and Service

Include a distinct section on each area of assignment, providing details on what the assignments/expectations were, and highlighting major contributions, achievements, and concerns. Be sure to remain consistent with your DFSC/SFSC guidelines; if your unit uses a point system, defined qualitative markers, or area-specific “satisfactory/unsatisfactory” evaluations, be sure to use them as required.

Documenting Concerns

Many of us as faculty and chairs have little experience and training on how to deliver “the unwelcome message.” When a DFSC/SFSC has concerns about a faculty member’s performance, it is only fair for those concerns to be communicated clearly and matter-of-factly so the faculty member has every opportunity to respond to those concerns and improve performance. Further, documentation of concerns allows future DFSC/SFSC to either (a) recognize the faculty member’s improvement or (b) take progressive action in light of a record of continuing poor performance. If a faculty member’s performance in a year is uneven, with some commendable contributions and some areas of concern, all should be documented.

The DFSC/SFSC may make explicit statements of future expectations, or recommend corrective actions, relevant to concerns. If corrective actions are recommended, specific outcomes or timelines should be described as well. Ensure that consistent language is used throughout the letter and that, for example, boilerplate in one section does not contradict expectations, corrective actions, or concerns in another area.

Note that some problematic behaviors/events, such as a positive finding of a serious policy violation, might trump positive contributions (publications, teaching evaluations) in terms of the overall evaluation. In such a circumstance, consult with the Offices of the Provost and General Counsel in terms of how to handle fair acknowledgement of contributions with frank communication of serious concerns.

Communicating Progress Toward Tenure and Promotion to Probationary Faculty

ASPT Policies require that probationary faculty receive annual feedback on their progress toward tenure, and, of course, that they be reviewed for reappointment on an annual basis. When a DFSC/SFSC is concerned that probationary faculty member may not be making good progress toward tenure, but is making sufficient progress to warrant reappointment, state such concerns clearly and concisely as soon as they arise. This gives the faculty member the best opportunity to correct, and gives the unit documentation for later decisions. The following samples, while not required, may be helpful when formulating feedback on progress toward tenure. Note that a separate template for letters to inform individuals of a non-reappointment recommendation, which includes information about the faculty member’s rights including the appeal process, is available. (Non-reappointment

recommendations do not necessarily have to occur during annual evaluations though there should be an appropriate reason to deviate from the usual practice in your unit.)

Adequate to good progress toward tenure

The DFSC/SFSC is pleased to note that, at this time, you are making good progress toward tenure. The awarding of tenure and promotion to Associate Professor requires presentation of a record that shows high quality professional performance in the mutually supportive areas of teaching, scholarly and creative productivity, and service. Therefore, we encourage you to build on your achievements and continue to develop in each of these areas.

Concerns about progress toward tenure

*The DFSC/SFSC is concerned that your current record of **[specific area(s) of concern, e.g., peer-reviewed publication]** is not reflective of good progress toward tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. The awarding of tenure and promotion to Associate Professor requires presentation of a record that shows high quality professional performance in the mutually supportive areas of teaching, scholarly and creative productivity, and service. Therefore, we encourage you to continue to develop in each of these areas and specifically to **[specific recommendations, e.g., complete and submit your works in progress to peer-reviewed journals]**.*

Recommendation of non-reappointment

*It is my obligation to inform you that the DFSC/SFSC voted to recommend that you not be reappointed for the 20xx-xx academic year. More information about this decision will be communicated in a separate letter (or, **insert language from non-reappointment template**).*

Summary/Conclusion

It is helpful to conclude annual evaluation letters with general statements reflecting the overall evaluation, thanking the faculty member for his/her contributions, noting the opportunity to discuss the evaluation with the chair, and briefly referring to the policies relevant to appeals in ASPT XIII. If the letter mentions concerns about poor performance, include a statement encouraging the faculty member to address the concerns. While you may express a willingness to support the faculty member in her/his attempts to address the concerns, be sure to make clear that the expectation is that she/he bears the responsibility for improved performance.