



# Department of Graphic Design Promotion & Tenure Guidance Document

## INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes the Department of Graphic Design's guidelines for faculty promotion and tenure and is consistent with the policies and procedures established by [Virginia Commonwealth University](#) and the [School of Arts](#). These departmental guidelines amplify the university and school criteria by addressing the Department's unique role as described in the Department of Graphic Design Mission Statement.

The primary goal of the curriculum is to educate students to be capable of integrating form and information for the purposes of effective visual communication. The Department of Graphic Design encourages the exploration of diverse problem-solving methodologies, innovative investigations and creative research in all forms of communication. It is dedicated to excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and professional practice.

The Department provides both an undergraduate and graduate education stressing critical, creative and intellectual thinking; awareness of individual, social and cultural issues; the integration of a range of technologies; and a concern for ethical development.

The program actively contributes to the school, university, local, state, national and international communities through its scholarly and creative activities, educational programs and service efforts.

Faculty who are candidates for promotion and/or tenure should use the three guidance documents – the University, the School, and the Department's documents – in concurrence, and address all guidelines therein. The sequence and section numbers in this departmental document are calibrated to those in the school and university documents.

## PROCEDURES

**1.0 Goal, Objectives and Authority**  
*current University and School policy*

**2.0 Faculty Ranks**  
*current University and School policy*

**2.1 Basic Criteria**  
*current University and School policy*

**2.1.1.B Basic Criteria for Promotion and Tenure**  
*current University and School policy*

**2.1.2 Application of Criteria and Criteria Ratings for promotion for Term (Non-tenure) Faculty**

Faculty with term appointments are valued members of the faculty and are eligible for promotion following the same criteria and procedures established for tenure-eligible and tenured faculty described in § 2.1.1.B (Basic Criteria for Promotion and Tenure).

The weighting of the candidate's mix of duties is established in the approved, annual Individual Work Plan and assessed by the chair in the candidate's annual report. Any changes of terms – upon renewal of the contract, annually, or at the end of a multi-year contract – shall be agreed to by the term faculty member and the department chair in writing.

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The voting rights of the faculty, when considering promotion of term faculty, shall be the same as when considering promotion and/or tenure for tenure-eligible faculty and promotion for tenured faculty.

### 2.2 Departmental and School Criteria for Tenured, Tenure-eligible and Term Faculty Member

Appropriate  
Credentials and  
Experience

The Master of Fine Arts degree is the terminal degree for faculty in the Department of Graphic Design. While the MFA is desired, certain equivalencies – including significant creative, professional and scholarly accomplishments in design – may be substituted. When faculty without terminal degrees are considered for hiring, equivalencies are determined by the search committee, the department chair, a caucus of tenured faculty, and the dean. The determination of equivalency shall be documented at the time of hiring and the document shall be placed in the faculty's permanent file.

With a range of ways to engage in design as a practice, it is recognized that the design industry remains primary to the discipline. In this context faculty in the Department of Graphic Design are expected to possess and pursue a balance between academic rigor, innovative practice, and professional experience. Faculty hired without equivalent professional experience are expected to structure activity toward an achievement of mastery in the discipline beyond what might be assumed by academic preparation.

Design is a body of activities carried out with the view to produce and to develop artifacts and knowledge to broaden the disciplinary field and thus provide value for the broader culture. It is important to note that design is a synthesis of valuable divergent skills, philosophies, strategies, and educational pursuits and that its practice is situated on a spectrum. In a university environment characterized by academic freedom and individual autonomy, it is the responsibility of each faculty member to establish and maintain an individual research program of Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth. It is not the prerogative of the university, school, or department to place limitations or definitions upon the creative/scholarly directions explored by each faculty member within their discipline. Care should be taken to allow for individual differences, uniqueness of contribution, philosophy and emphasis, consistent with overall departmental goals and contemporary design practice.

Faculty are responsible for contributing to the vitality of the department through three areas of activity: Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth, Teaching, and Service.

Continuing  
Scholarship and  
Professional  
Growth

It is important to note that design is a synthesis of valuable divergent skills, philosophies, strategies, and pedagogies and that its practice is situated on a spectrum. In recognition of this richness and diversity, faculty research areas in the Department of Graphic Design include, but are not limited to Scholarship, Professional Practice, Speculative Praxis and Pedagogy.

#### SCHOLARSHIP

Research that manifests itself in the form of writing, editing and/or curating, making original and innovative contributions to the field. Possible are two different yet equally valid categories of publishing for academic and/or trade audiences.

#### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The application of design in the professional arena for clients commissioned and implemented within a culture of commerce. As design is an inherently collaborative activity, creative performance in a variety of collaborative or consultative roles is valued and encouraged.

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### SPECULATIVE PRAXIS

Self-initiated investigations and experiments into issues related to the artifacts and processes of design as well as their impact on the broader culture. These investigations question and extend the boundaries of design through the making of cultural interventions and polemic objects, interfaces, and actions, untethered to the marketplace.

### PEDAGOGY

Research that manifests itself in the form of analysis of teaching design and teaching design methods, philosophies, theories, and histories.

These areas of activity should be assessed and validated through the lenses of engagement, dissemination and recognition. The range, reach, or scope of sustained engagement, substantive dissemination and critical recognition shall serve as primary indicators of significance for design faculty and Peer Review Committee.

In evaluating areas of activity, the consistency of the engagement and the ongoing involvement in the discipline should be considered. The scope of the dissemination should be considered in regard to the reputation and reach of the network in which it circulates. The degree of critical analysis brought by the organizers of the recognition shall be of prime importance. The stature of the organizers (publisher, institution, editor, curator, juror...) should also be used to evaluate significance. Distinction between local, regional, national and international achievements must be noted.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to decide the appropriate category under which their work is included. The work can be included in one category only. The candidate's direct role in any work of a collaborative or consultative nature must be clearly demarcated. Commissions from professional practice that require problem solving abilities beyond merely technical or production assistance, shall be classified as "Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth." Those commissions requiring solely technical and production skills shall be classified as "Service." Commissions where creative direction with students receiving course credit for roles in the project will be considered under "Teaching."

Faculty are required to report their research as part of the university's annual report process, as such the candidate should make available to the Peer Review Committee all possible representative evidence of research activity, both published and unpublished.

### Teaching

Excellence in teaching shall be measured by the following objectives:

Faculty shall structure courses to cultivate the development of students' research skills, problem solving abilities, process and production craft, with a strong visual orientation to achieve the goals and values of the department, and prepare students to play a meaningful role in the future of design practice.

Faculty shall maintain high standards in the evaluation of each students ability to achieve the learning outcomes of a course. Grading mechanisms should utilize a rigorous framework that focuses on student learning, ensures objectivity, and maintains grade consistency across multiple semesters. Faculty shall maintain high standards in the evaluation of students' aesthetic decision-making, communication effectiveness, critical thinking, as well as technical and presentation skills.

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Faculty shall reassess the relative effectiveness of personal teaching methods and course content on a regular basis. This shall often result in development of new courses, content, and methods.

Faculty shall assume responsibility for each course taught, including:

- coverage of assigned course content
- achievement of course objectives
- interface of each course with other curriculum components

Faculty shall maintain flexibility in teaching methods and the curriculum to acknowledge individual student needs and goals.

The Peer Review Committee shall evaluate the quality of the candidate's teaching through the assessment of all course materials for all classes taught in the period under review, peer observation letters, student course evaluations, and letters from present and former students.

Cumulative student course evaluations shall be viewed as representing one perspective on the quality and clarity of ideas and information conveyed and shall be viewed as an overall representative pattern rather than for any particular complaints or compliments in isolation. Student growth is best evidenced by the cumulative review of examples which provides a valuable means for assessing the quality of studio teaching.

The candidate shall submit all course material organized chronologically and provide descriptions of contributions to the total instructional process, including, though not limited to, project innovations, curriculum development, and student mentoring.

When the Peer Review Committee solicits written evaluations from present and former students, the list of contributors may include names supplied by the candidate. Written evaluations by a candidate's advisees shall be examined to ascertain the soundness and accuracy of mentoring.

### Service

Expectations for service by faculty in the Department of Graphic Design are consistent with the statement in the School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures. Service encompasses but is not limited to collegial participation on university, school, and department committees, other assigned duties, contributions to the larger community, and holding office or membership in professional bodies. The Peer Review Committee may solicit written peer evaluations for consultation to ascertain a candidate's department on committees and the range of their contributions.

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### **3.0 Appointments**

*current University and School policy*

### **4.0 University Promotion & Tenure Policy Review Committee**

*current University and School policy*

### **5.0 School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure Committee**

*current University and School policy*

### **6.0 University Appeal Committee**

*current University and School policy*

### **7.0 Academic Review Procedures for Promotion and Tenure**

*current University and School policy*

#### **7.1.1 Peer Evaluation**

##### **CANDIDATE MATERIALS**

In preparation for evaluation by the Peer Review Committee, the candidate, with assistance from the department chair, shall develop a file that should include, but not be limited to:

- current Curriculum vitae
- Personal statement
- Annual departmental evaluations
- Verification of postdoctoral training or special experiences
- List of suggested external evaluators (for assessment of Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth)
- Comprehensive review materials for all external evaluators (3 copies)
- List of contacts and addresses (for assessment of Teaching)
- Complete documentation of Teaching
- Examples of student work
- Documentation of Service

##### **EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

The candidate's Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth shall be evaluated independently by external evaluators. A minimum of three external evaluators shall be selected from a list compiled by the Peer Review Committee. The list should also include names of potential evaluators recommended by the candidate. The candidate must indicate the nature of their relationship to the external reviewer.

Once the candidate has been notified of the selection, the candidate has the right to object to the choice of an external evaluator by notifying the committee in writing, within five working days, of the reasons why an evaluator should be excluded.

Professional accomplishments and activities that constitute external review must be established in the Peer Review Committee and chair's reports. As specified in the School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure

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Policies and Procedures, the Peer Review Committee and department chair shall summarize the qualifications of evaluators in their final reports.

In all instances, external evaluators shall be asked to evaluate only Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth, not to make recommendations for or against tenure and/or promotion.

### **PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is expected that tenured faculty shall perform at “very good” levels in at least two of the three areas of Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth, Teaching, and Service specified under the established school criteria (see § 2.1.1.B Basic Criteria for Promotion and Tenure). The recommendation must be based on a balanced evaluation of all factors and consistent with the rationale given in the report.

The report must fully discuss all criteria, putting them into perspective in the candidate’s discipline. It must state the evaluation, give a full discussion of the reasons, and report the vote on the Peer Review Committee’s assessment in terms of each criterion. The report must record the secret ballot with an anonymous count of the committee’s final vote and must be signed by all committee members. All views must be stated in the report; if there is a minority report, it should be circulated to all committee members before submission. A unanimous vote is not required. The committee should make a definitive recommendation if possible; however, genuine divergence should be reported.

The report shall be forwarded to the department chair, who shall make their own evaluation and recommendation. Both evaluations and recommendations as well as the candidate’s complete file shall be forwarded to the School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure Committee.

The department chair, School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure Committee, and/or dean may return the report to the Peer Review Committee for clarification or additional information.

### **FINAL REPORT**

The Peer Review Committee report shall include the following:

- Cover sheet with final vote and vote count in each category recorded on it
- Introduction
- Summation of the review, evaluation of the candidate, and recommendation for promotion and/or tenure
- Signature sheet with names of committee members and ranks
- External evaluations
- Credentials of external evaluators
- Committee summary
- Candidate’s curriculum vitae
- Department promotion and tenure guidelines
- Peer review sub-committee reports
- Appropriate Credentials and Experience
- Continuing Scholarship and Professional Growth
- Teaching
- Service

*Final Report continued--*

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- Approved minutes of all meetings
- Appendices
- Sample letters and/or evaluation forms sent out for assessment of candidate  
(external evaluators, students, university peers, professional associates, alumnae, and others)
- Responses to letters and forms
- Student evaluation tabulation forms
- Student course evaluations for each semester of teaching
- Candidate’s support materials
- Other pertinent material

### **7.1.2 Department chair**

The chair’s report shall be consistent with departmental, school, and university guidelines. The evaluation and recommendation in each category and in the summary shall reiterate the requirements for promotion and tenure in the department for the rank sought by the candidate. The chair shall state whether or not the candidate meets the requirements for tenure and/or promotion. The recommendation in each category shall be supported by the documentation in the report. If the chair does not support the candidate or if the recommendation is different from the peer review committee’s recommendation, the chair shall justify the differences. The chair must sign the report.

The report shall be presented in the same sequence as the peer review committee report (noted above).

### **8.0 Administrative Review Procedures for Academic Personnel Actions**

*current University and School procedures*

### **9.0 Appeal Process**

*current University and School procedures*

### **10.0 The President and Board of Visitors**

*current University policy*

### **11.0 Procedure for Termination of Employment of Tenured Faculty Members**

*current University and School policy*

### **12.0 Procedures for Review and Amendment of this Document**

Any faculty member can propose an amendment to this document by forwarding the proposed amendment to all members of the department at least 15 days before the next faculty meeting and asking the department chair to place the proposal on the agenda for said meeting.

When university or school policy changes, requiring alteration to this document, or if the department chair desires a revision, the chair shall appoint an ad hoc committee to prepare a proposal for revision to submit to the faculty as designated above.

A majority vote of the full-time departmental faculty is required to amend this document.



## **Document Revision History**

Approved by the School of the Arts Promotion and Tenure Committee: *April 4, 2016*

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