UCSD School of Biological Sciences
Normal Merit Standards
Teaching Professor (Professor of Teaching) Series

Revised: Winter Quarter 2026

The School of Biological Sciences has determined the merit advancement criteria for the teaching professor series to aid in the evaluation of achievement, and to help determine when an acceleration is warranted. Teaching Professors are evaluated on their (1) teaching, (2) scholarly activity and professional achievement, and (3) University and public service.

Teaching

Excellence in teaching is the primary criterion on which teaching professors are evaluated. Sustained teaching excellence should be demonstrated for each level of advancement. Teaching excellence can be demonstrated in three broad areas: effective and inclusive classroom teaching, curricular innovation, and mentoring. The faculty member should articulate in their teaching statement how they have achieved excellence in teaching, and this should be reflected in the review letter from their department chair.

Prior to promotion to tenure, Assistant Teaching Professors are expected to have established a sustained pattern of effective and inclusive teaching in their classes. They should employ evidence-based teaching, including active learning or student-centered activities during class. They should use equity-minded teaching practices that foster an inclusive learning environment. Finally, they should gather and use data on teaching effectiveness, learning outcomes, and/or student experiences to improve their teaching over time. Evidence of excellence in teaching can take many forms and may include descriptions of how the candidate's evidence-based teaching methods or course structure help students to achieve course learning goals and/or foster equity and inclusion in the classroom; data on teaching effectiveness, learning outcomes, or student experiences from assessments, surveys, or student assignments; holistic teaching evaluations by peers or administered by the Center for Engaged Teaching; or student evaluations (SET), bearing in mind the limitations and biases of student evaluations and paying attention to student comments.

Curricular innovation: All faculty should provide evidence that their teaching has evolved and improved over time. In addition, Teaching Professors may demonstrate teaching excellence through creating educational content, modifying the structure of a course to incorporate evidence-based practices and increase inclusivity, designing a new experimental module for a lab course, or designing a new course. Some faculty will have the opportunity to develop a new course or substantial new curriculum such as a lab module; however, it is important to recognize that depending on the courses they teach, not all faculty will have equal opportunity to engage in curricular innovation.

Finally, pre-tenure Assistant Teaching Professors should have begun mentoring or training a population of undergraduate or graduate students (including as thesis committee members or PIs) and/or Instructional Assistants from diverse backgrounds.

Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor: Most Teaching Professors teach 5 courses a year, usually including 2 – 4 unique courses. When first hired, Teaching Professors are almost always teaching

courses for the first time, and/or developing an entirely new course. Thus, at the 4th year appraisal, the most important expectation is to have shown excellence in recent teaching by demonstrating sustained progress toward meeting all three of the criteria for teaching excellence above. By the time of the tenure review, Assistant Teaching Professors should demonstrate documented, sustained teaching excellence in all three criteria. Sustained teaching excellence is not defined by the total number of classes taught or years of teaching, but rather establishing a track record of meeting the standards above.

Following tenure, the expectation is that the faculty member will continue to meet the three standards of teaching excellence described above. The faculty member may have the opportunity for more substantial accomplishments in any of the three areas, but the opportunities for this will depend on which courses the candidate is teaching.

Professional Achievement and Scholarly Activity

Teaching professors are expected to engage in professional and/or scholarly activity. The scholarly or professional activity may be related to teaching and pedagogy, to a discipline in Biological Sciences, or some combination of the two. Scholarly and professional activity results in products that reach beyond the individual's classroom and, in most cases, beyond the university. Some examples include, but are not limited to, developing or substantially revising a lab manual or other novel instructional materials that are used by other instructors; publishing research or curriculum in educational or biological disciplines, such as refereed conference proceedings, peer-reviewed articles, books, or book chapters; or presenting work (or having students present mentored work) at academic conferences.

Supporting UCSD's 'culture of collaboration,' we value collaborative and interdisciplinary scholarly/professional products. Faculty are expected to clearly document their individual contributions to collaborative products.

As indicated in the APM, certain administrative work (e.g., of learning centers and teaching programs) and community outreach work are also relevant. Participating in intensive professional development to support growth into scholarly or leadership roles is also a type of professional activity. Documentation of professional achievement from leadership roles should define specific accomplishments and their effects.

Teaching Professors in the School of Biological Sciences generally teach 5 classes per year that include two or three different courses. The number of different courses taught, and total number of student contact hours (e.g., lab classes have significantly more contact hours) should be taken into consideration when assessing achievement in this category, as it affects the time available for professional and scholarly activity. If a teaching professor teaches 6 classes per year, the expectation for professional/scholarly achievement is more limited.

For promotion to tenure, an Assistant Teaching Professor should provide evidence of sustained scholarly and/or professional activity, with consideration given to the time constraints of teaching. This should include some documented activity that disseminates the candidate's work beyond UCSD. Some examples of scholarly and/or professional accomplishment that would satisfy the expectations for tenure include: a peer-reviewed publication plus an additional scholarly product such as a conference poster presentation; supporting and/or mentoring student researchers who present the

supervised research at academic conferences; or developing substantial new instructional materials that are disseminated beyond UCSD. Extramural funding is not expected but can help support promotions as evidence of a sustained research program.

Following tenure, the expectation is that the faculty member continues to engage in documented scholarly and/or professional activity that is disseminated beyond UCSD.

University, Professional, and Public Service

Faculty members are expected to actively participate in the life of their academic unit, starting with involvement in faculty meetings, seminars, and recruitment activities. Additionally, faculty should contribute to the effective operation of the School through various forms of service. This includes serving on School committees or working groups and undertaking roles such as the lead instructor in a course or as a departmental representative on the Representative Assembly. All service activities shall be explained in the departmental letter, including what each service activity entails so that campus reviewers will understand their significance.

In line with the University's tradition of shared governance, senior faculty members are expected to engage in service activities beyond the School, such as participating in the Academic Senate or other campus-wide or system-wide initiatives. Expectations for service and leadership grow with increased rank and step; consideration of merit advances or accelerations will be impeded for senior faculty who do not engage in selfless campus service.

Assistant Professors should have light service loads and are expected to serve on one School committee. Faculty at higher ranks are expected, at a minimum, to serve on one committee and expand their service contributions beyond the School. Full Professors, Professors at Steps VI-IX, and Professors Above Scale are expected to provide selfless service—defined as contributions extending beyond their immediate research areas—with greater leadership responsibilities and campus-wide or system-wide engagement expected at higher ranks.

Faculty members at all ranks and career stages should clearly document their service roles, including committee, working group, or commission involvement, detailing the frequency, scope and impact of their service commitments. Faculty are expected to actively participate in committees, and School committee chairs may be consulted to verify and assess individual contributions. School committees are expected to maintain accurate records of membership and attendance.

Beyond School and University service, faculty members are evaluated on professional contributions, such as journal peer review, editorial roles, grant proposal reviews, chairing or organizing conferences, and service to professional societies, foundations, or governmental agencies. Such professional activities should reflect a faculty member's national and international standing and should increase as faculty move to higher ranks.

Contributions to UC San Diego's Principles of Community

The School seeks to create and sustain an environment that embraces and promotes the success of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences. Faculty are encouraged to make contributions to promote UC San Diego's Principles of Community

(https://www.ucsd.edu/about/principles.html) in the School, at UC San Diego, and at larger scales, to foster the success of students from all backgrounds in the classroom and in STEM degree programs and careers, and build a supportive community that fosters productivity, creativity and belonging for all. Such contributions will be recognized and can include enhancing our community through service, teaching, research, or combinations of these areas. Contributions that demonstrate accountability, provide detailed success metrics, and document partnerships with community organizations and schools are encouraged.

Addressing Impacts

Faculty may document significant external factors that may have affected their research, teaching, or service during the review period, such as grant funding delays or cancellations, labor actions, or laboratory floods or fires, so reviewers can evaluate performance relative to opportunity. These impacts should be discussed in the research, teaching, and service statements. This context may be considered in merit and similar performance-based reviews. For promotion reviews at any level, and for accelerations, expectations are not reduced based on external impacts; when an ongoing impact affects the ability to meet normal expectations, it should be addressed through formal accommodations or workload adjustments arranged in advance through the appropriate offices. To preserve privacy, health- and family-related circumstances should not be disclosed in the review file; instead, formal accommodations should be sought through Disability Counseling and Consulting for medical issues, or through Academic Personnel for family-care related issues.

Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor

See above for the Teaching, Scholarly and Professional Activity, and Service expectations for promotion to Associate Teaching Professor.

From the UC San Diego Academic Personnel Services Process Manual: "Promotion from the Assistant level to the Associate level, regardless of when proposed, is not considered an acceleration. Assistant-level appointees should be proposed for promotion whenever they are deemed ready for such advancement. However, a promotion to a higher-than-normal step at the Associate level is considered an acceleration. If an Associate Teaching Professor is promoted to Professor after two years at step III, it is considered a normal promotion, even if the individual has not spent six years as Associate Teaching Professor." (https://aps.ucsd.edu/tools/ap_process_manual.html)

Promotion to Full Teaching Professor

The School of Biology has established expectations for faculty eligible for consideration for advancement to full Teaching Professor. For this promotion, it is expected that faculty will have a strong record of sustained, effective, and inclusive classroom teaching, curricular innovation, and mentoring.

Promotion to this rank requires documentation of multiple scholarly and/or professional achievements that reach a national audience. The service expectations are greater than at the Associate Teaching Professor level; we expect Departmental and School service at this level as well as meaningful contributions to the campus and the profession. Campus service includes consistent and active

participation in faculty governance, such as impactful committees in the School, efforts to support the UC San Diego Principles of Community at the School or Campus level, and sustained engagement in the Section's functions such as faculty searches.

Step VI

The School of Biology has established expectations for faculty eligible for consideration for advancement to Teaching Professor Step VI. For this advancement, it is expected that faculty will have a strong record of sustained effective and inclusive classroom teaching, curricular innovation, and mentoring. Advancement to this rank requires documentation of continued scholarly and/or professional achievements that reach a national or international audience. Recognition of scholarly and/or professional activity at this level should be reflected through metrics such as invited talks, leadership roles in conferences or professional societies, service as an advisory board member or consultant on reviews of research grants or institutions, service in editorial roles, leadership in the training of other educators beyond the university, broad impact of disseminated educational materials, etc. We expect a strong record of service to the Department and the School as well as important contributions to the campus and the profession. Campus service includes sustained and active participation in faculty governance, such as serving on senate committees, high impact committees in the School, and sustained engagement in the School's functions such as faculty searches and mentoring junior faculty.

Advancement to Above Scale and Advancement Further Above Scale

The School of Biology has established expectations for faculty eligible for consideration for advancement to above scale or advancement further above scale. For this advancement, it is expected that faculty will have a strong record of sustained effective and inclusive classroom teaching, curricular innovation, and mentoring. Advancement to this rank requires documentation of continued significant scholarly and/or professional achievements that reach a national and international audience. Consistent recognition of scholarly and/or professional activity at this level should be reflected through metrics such as invited talks, leadership roles in conferences or professional societies, service as an advisory board member or consultant on reviews of research grants or institutions, service in editorial roles, leadership in the training of other educators beyond the university, broad impact of disseminated educational materials, etc. In addition, there should be evidence that this level of achievement will continue beyond the current review.

We expect a significant record of service to the Department and the School as well as significant contributions to the campus and the profession. Campus service includes consistent and active participation in faculty governance at the highest level, such as serving on senate committees with campus-wide impact, efforts to increase diversity at the School or Campus level, high impact committees in the School, and sustained engagement in the School's functions such as faculty searches and mentoring junior faculty.

Accelerations

Accelerations are exceptional, considered when contributions in the review period significantly exceed the normal departmental expectations in one or more of the areas of review: teaching, scholarly or

professional activity, and university and public service. There should be no evidence of weaknesses in other areas.

While excellent teaching is expected for advancement, exceptional accomplishments in teaching may help justify an acceleration. Examples of exceptional accomplishments in teaching that could support an acceleration include unusual teaching innovation, revamping/development of major curriculum, a teaching award, exceptional mentoring, or reducing educational disparities for students, including, but not limited to, first-generation students, underrepresented students, and students with financial needs.

Accelerations supported by excellent on scholarly and/or professional activity may be proposed when the combination of the number of professional achievements and their significance during the review period exceeds normal standards as defined by the School. Some examples of exceptional activity that could support an acceleration include developing a research program with impactful contributions to the field, significant educational contributions beyond UCSD, or developing an educational program during the review period that will lead to significant community impact.

In service, activities with significant, broad, and transformative impact may contribute to acceleration, especially when service significantly exceeds expectations for the rank. As with other service, expectations for contributions to UC San Diego Principles of Community will be commensurate with rank, especially if such contributions are to be included in the justification for an acceleration.

Campus Presence

As an in-person institution, the University conducts its regular business, including teaching and research, with faculty, staff, and students physically present. The connectivity and common experiences afforded by campus presence are essential for building, strengthening, and maintaining a robust and university culture that supports our innovative work as a student-centered, research-focused, service-oriented university. Therefore, faculty are expected to be in service and on campus throughout the academic year, in synch with the academic and administrative calendar published each year. Essentially, unless on an approved leave or due to approved accommodations (such as ASMD or as a result of the interactive process), faculty should be present and available throughout the fall, winter and spring quarters.