

Invisible Work: Equity-Oriented Guidelines for Merit, Reappointment, & Promotion | College of Arts and Sciences, UW Seattle

Preamble:

A global pandemic and sustained social unrest has thrown into stark relief inequities that have long been experienced by historically marginalized faculty at UW. Even before the pandemic, work was begun to address these inequities: In 2018 the Faculty Senate released the [UW Faculty 2050 report](#), which urged administrators to develop promotion guidelines with expanded definitions of research and teaching, including collaborative, community-engaged, and/or interdisciplinary work. Echoing that report, in [2021 the UW Provost](#) issued a mandate for revised hiring, reappointment, and promotion criteria to support diversity, equity, and inclusion across units. Many units have begun the work of revising guidelines and procedures to prioritize diversity. However, as the struggles experienced by many throughout 2020 have shown us, much more work remains to be done. Accordingly, the following guidelines were developed¹ for departments within the College of Arts and Sciences to serve as a heuristic for carrying out hiring, promotion, reappointment, and merit procedures in an equitable and inclusive way.

In particular, these guidelines help faculty and administrators to recognize and reward in a formal way the myriad kinds of invisible work disproportionately carried out by marginalized faculty (e.g., contingent or teaching faculty, junior faculty, faculty of color, women, disabled faculty, caretakers, faculty whose work centers equity and social justice, and others). “Invisible work” refers to work that often takes the form of teaching, administration, and service that goes above and beyond formal job expectations, and yet is insufficiently recognized or compensated (whereas traditional research entails both disciplinary and institutional recognition). As such, faculty take on this valuable labor on top of regular teaching loads and research expectations. Overburdened, they are more likely to fall behind on research expectations or teaching innovations, which leads to lower rates of promotion and higher levels of burnout. All too routinely, institutional leadership signals a value for self-care, but does not actually take [“steps to adjust the norms and expectations that are most likely responsible for employee stress and burnout,”](#) and the responsibility of managing work-related burnout is left to individual faculty members who experience it. The intended effect of these guidelines is to help redistribute that responsibility across departments and the College overall.

One difficulty in developing equity-oriented guidelines is that there is considerable variability across departments when it comes to teaching loads, how an FTE is defined, and how teaching, research, and service expectations are proportioned. For that reason, these guidelines attempt to describe in concrete terms the kinds of labor that are essential to the university’s mission, but that are too infrequently recognized during formal merit, reappointment, and promotion processes.

Potential Equity Outcomes of This Document:

- To address the reasons why invisible work is unequally or inequitably distributed among faculty.

¹ This document was drafted by a working group sponsored by the English Department and consisting of CAS faculty Megan Callow, Habiba Ibrahim, Chris Laws, Kate Norako, Andrea Otáñez, and Mary Pat Wenderoth. With special thanks to English Department chair Anis Bawarshi for sponsoring the group and providing feedback on the draft.

- To decrease behind-the-scenes, subjective, arbitrary negotiations that take place between faculty and department chairs about workload.
- To inform faculty and administrators about the value invisible work has to the university's mission.

Potential Uses of This Document:

At the Unit Level:

- To assist units in the development of promotion guidelines for all faculty ranks.
- To provide faculty and department chairs with language to use when developing merit guidelines.
- To give faculty committees a consultation tool when creating job ads and hiring criteria.
- To make the relationship between the various kinds of academic-related work in which faculty engage and unit-level support for such work transparent.
- To inform the development of a quantitative system (such as the "plus" system) so faculty engaging in some threshold of work defined in these guidelines can earn additional support in the form of course release, TAs, graders, summer compensation, etc.
- To support faculty in efforts to document invisible work when drafting annual activity reports for merit review, reappointment, and promotion documents.

At the College Level:

- To provide the College Council, divisional and College deans with a resource during reappointment, promotion, and retention efforts.
- To assist faculty and administrators with recognizing how institutional needs are routinely met through invisible work.
- To make the value of unconventional career decisions and trajectories visible and legible.
- To complement existing resources for faculty recruitment, retention, and advancement.

Forms of Work

What follows is a list of the forms of work that are often invisible in academia. Or, if they are nominally recognized, the *scale* at which some faculty engage this labor may be disproportionate, may not be sufficiently recognized or compensated, or may be carried out by faculty whose rank does not carry with it expectations for such labor. Thus, this document should be used as a guide for identifying the various circumstances that lead to faculty work becoming invisible. These forms have been organized into categories:

- Education-related department-level work (undergraduate and graduate)
- Service to department
- Labor-intensive teaching
- Mentoring and advising
- Institution-level service

- Equity and social justice work
- Scholarship beyond traditional research, and service to profession
- Higher education-related community service

There is overlap within and across these categories, and the examples within each are not meant to be exhaustive, but generative. The examples listed may need to be adapted according to different departments' needs and circumstances, and may be more or less applicable, depending on an individual faculty's rank and job expectations.

Education-related Work at the Department Level

Undergraduate work

- Reading/screening applications to major
- Generating credit hours through independent studies
- Taking on a course overload
- Engaging in student outreach, such as conducting workshops for students (how to write a conference proposal, abstract, etc.)
- Acting as faculty adviser for student organizations (RSOs)
- Developing and maintaining service-learning courses and partnerships
- Participating in rotating lectureship for large intro courses
- Developing new course(s), applying for course approval
- Serving on student awards committees
- Writing letters of recommendation for graduate school, professional school, jobs, and internships
- Offering disproportionate office hours or other informal student meetings
- Participating in regular teaching development (such as Center for Teaching & Learning programs), and/or conducting teaching & learning-related scholarship

Graduate level work

- Reading/screening graduate applications
- Graduate thesis advising
- Serving as a graduate student representative
- Providing mentorship and support to TA teams and/or graduate student instructors
- Writing recommendation letters, serving as job references
- Developing hybrid graduate-undergraduate courses to help students meet graduation requirements

Service to Department

- Engaging in peer review of colleagues' teaching (class observations, writing letters for promotion)
- Chairing a committee
- Serving on or chairing a faculty search committee
- Serving on or chairing a tenure or promotion committee
- Serving on departmental executive committees

- Hiring, personnel management of, or consultation on placement of TAs, graders, part-time lecturers, ASEs, or postdocs
- Performing program administration above and beyond currently recognized parameters
- Regularly attending faculty meetings
- Chairing or overseeing unit accreditation/review self-studies

Institutional Service

- Serving on College / UW Councils, Faculty Senate, or other governance bodies
- Serving on university-wide committees (Simpson Center board, Diversity Council, Libraries Committee, etc.)
- Serving on promotion or hiring committees in another department or unit
- Leading or participating in institutional or extra-departmental grants
- Serving on department / unit review committees, conducting site visits
- Serving in University and College ceremonies

Mentoring and Advising

- Graduate and undergraduate advising and professionalization, above and beyond graduate committee expectations
- Directing or serving on graduate student committees, or otherwise providing scholarly support to graduate students (this pertains to teaching faculty, who are not obligated to provide such support)
- Serving on graduate committees of students who attend other universities
- Organizing, recruiting, and leading interest sessions for departmental majors and minors
- Writing a disproportionate share of recommendation letters
- Holding a disproportionate number of office hours, due to demand
- Reviewing student manuscripts, application letters, or resumes
- Advising students on career development
- Serving as Student Support Services liaison
- Consulting with other faculty on teaching, formally (through Center for Teaching & Learning, Task Force on Writing, etc.) or informally
- Mentoring junior or part-time colleagues:
 - Providing feedback on manuscripts and promotion materials (while not serving on a promotion committee)
 - Writing letters of recommendation for colleagues
 - Performing informal teaching observations
 - Reviewing syllabuses
 - Trouble-shooting classroom issues and student crises

Equity and Social Justice

- Developing courses and providing advising that explicitly welcome and support first generation students, and students from historically marginalized groups
- Creating or supporting programs for people doing public educational work

- Performing high school outreach
- Substantially revising programs and/or courses to respond and attend to current social and cultural issues, especially courses that focus on social inequities, including racism, sexism, ableism and other forms of social injustice
- Developing or revising course curriculum (or other job-related materials) for accessibility
- Supporting students in precarious domestic, economic, health, or visa conditions
- Providing individualized mentoring to marginalized students

Scholarship, Research, and Service to the Profession:

Some items in this section are recognized when carried out by tenure-track faculty, but less so (or not at all) when carried out by teaching-track faculty. Thus, the salience of the following items will likely vary depending on rank. Also, some forms of scholarship, like the ones described in the final bullet, are frequently given less weight for all faculty ranks, despite their value to the university's mission.

- Reviewing manuscripts
- Organizing symposia, conferences, or research initiatives
- Contributing to the professional development of colleagues in the profession at large:
 - Providing feedback on manuscripts
 - Writing letters of recommendation
 - Writing book endorsements
- Holding national and international leadership positions and performing committee work at professional organizations
- Managing digital projects, especially if those projects involve assembling, hiring, training, and mentoring teams of graduate students
- Carrying out non-traditional forms of scholarship, such as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, public-facing or community-engaged scholarship, citizen science, etc.

Labor Intensive Teaching

- Teaching large lecture courses with disproportionate frequency
 - Engaging in copious student correspondence and office hours
- Developing and/or regularly teaching labor-intensive writing courses (with or without the “W” credit)
- Developing innovative online or hybrid courses
- Developing and/or regularly teaching honors and/or capstone courses
- Developing and/or regularly teaching service-learning courses
- Conducting or overseeing individualized projects with students
- Developing and teaching a cross-listed or co-taught course
- Developing and/or regularly teaching workshop-style classes whose pedagogy centers writing and feedback

Higher Education-Related Community Service

- Conducting community outreach or education
- Participating in public readings or events

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- Visiting or teaching in local K-12 schools
- Creating and sustaining partnerships with community (Seattle Arts and Lecture, Hugo House, community-news outlets, etc.)
- Teaching or supporting education in prisons, hospitals, or other community organizations