

## Annual Review Letters: Guidance for Chairs and Directors

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**The following guidelines are intended to assist department Chairs and academic program Directors with preparing annual review letters for faculty. The purpose of the annual review is to provide probationary and tenured faculty and lecturers with written balanced and constructive feedback about their performance in core responsibilities related to teaching, research and creative work, service, and personal characteristics.**

Per Faculty Handbook (FHB) sections [B4](#) and [B3](#), all probationary and tenured faculty and lecturers must receive annual reviews. In most units, Chairs and Directors perform annual reviews. In non-departmentalized units, by-laws may designate others (supervisors, committee chairs, Associate Deans) to perform reviews. Below, we refer to “Chairs and Directors” broadly as those with authority to perform annual reviews.

Annual reviews should provide more than just summaries of faculty accomplishments. They should situate performance within department, college, and university standards and address both strengths and areas for development. All professors should receive feedback that supports progress towards professional goals. Chairs and Directors should meet with faculty to discuss the reviews.

The FHB separates annual review processes for probationary faculty (FHB B4.2), tenured faculty (B4.9) and lecturers ([B3.3](#)). For efficiency, consistency, and clarity, departments (or, where appropriate, schools/colleges) may decide to apply the same review processes for all faculty members.

Department governance documents should clearly describe the processes for reviewing faculty.

During milestone review years, the mid-probationary, tenure, and/or promotion reviews stand in for the annual review.

### *Probational and Tenured Faculty:*

The annual review for probational and tenured faculty should occur during the Spring semester. Annual reviews are based on the calendar year, not the academic year. Faculty members starting appointments in the Spring semester should receive their first review during the following Spring semester (FHB B4.2.2).

### *Lecturers:*

FHB B3.3.b.1 specifies that during the first year of their appointment the annual review be conducted in the Spring, “in time for the Chair or Director to provide written notice to the Lecturer no later than March 31 whether the Lecturer’s contract will be renewed.” In subsequent years, “the review must be conducted in the fall, in time for the Chair [or Director] to provide written notice to the Lecturer no later than December 15.”

Annual reviews for lecturers should address department-specific workload expectations for teaching, service, and other work. For example, some (but not all) departments have service expectations for lecturers as part of workload documents.

### **Materials and Areas Reviewed**

Departments should create a template with prompts that solicit information on teaching, research/creative work, and service contributions. Units should ask for more than a CV. The specific materials solicited from faculty may vary by department/school/college workload expectations and faculty title and may include, but are not limited to, the following (FHB B4.2.3; B4.9.3):

**Teaching:** courses taught, enrollment figures, syllabi, records of student mentoring, student evaluations, teaching (“peer”) observations, awards, professional development related to teaching, self-evaluation based on previous year’s goals and reflection on teaching impact and areas for improvement, and goals for the coming year. Per FHB B1.2.1, “Library faculty, in the discharge of their professional duties, shall be regarded as engaged in teaching.”

Academic Affairs recommends at least one peer teaching observation per year, especially for lecturers and tenure-track faculty seeking promotion. Chairs and Directors should work with faculty to select and schedule peer reviewers.

To guide reflections, goal setting, and discussion of professional development, we encourage faculty, Chairs, and Directors to consider the seven [principles involved in the "Framework for Teaching & Learning Success"](#) established by the Teaching Enhancement Committee and adopted by the Faculty Senate in Spring 2025. Faculty should discuss efforts to improve their teaching and student learning outcomes in their courses, especially as they relate to the seven principles (although faculty are not expected to show evidence of professional development in all seven areas).

**Research/Creative Work:** publications/performances/exhibitions and other related output, work in progress (under review and/or in other stages of development), funding (grants applied for and awarded), awards, professional development related to research/creative work, community-engaged research, self-evaluation based on previous year's goals, reflection on research/creative scholarship impact and areas for improvement, and goals for the coming year.

**Service:** list of department, university, and professional service, descriptions of service or leadership roles, public-facing service (community engagement and outreach), self-evaluation based on previous year's goals and reflection on service impact and areas for improvement.

**Impacts of Federal Actions and Changing Funding Landscape:** In the statements for each area above, Academic Affairs encourages, but does not require, faculty to reflect on the ways that recent changes in federal policies and funding priorities have impacted research, creative work, teaching, and/or service contributions. The purpose of these impact statements is to provide faculty with the opportunity to document, summarize, and reflect upon the effects of federal actions on faculty workload, professional opportunities, productivity, performance, and trajectory. Impacts might include, but are not limited to, the termination of federal support, changing priorities and expectations of federal and foundation funding agencies, or faculty's inability to travel to present or perform work.

### **The Process for Reviewing Annual Review Materials**

For probationary faculty, the Faculty Handbook requires Chairs and Directors to consult “at least the tenured members of the department, and where appropriate, with any other faculty who are well acquainted with the probationary member’s work” (FHB B4.2.3). For post-tenure reviews, the review “may be performed by the Chair or the Chair and a committee of tenured faculty” (FHB B4.9.5).

Except for very small units, Academic Affairs recommends that Chairs and Directors consult with other faculty before writing reviews regardless of the rank of faculty members under evaluation.

Department governance documents should describe the process by which the Chair or Director solicits feedback from faculty. Some departments may consult all tenured faculty members of the department and others may convene an advisory committee to evaluate annual review materials.

The Chair's or Director's letter should summarize other reviews, reflecting the overall balance and intent of faculty reviewer comments in full context, capturing both strengths and areas for development accurately. The letter should then provide the Chair's own balanced assessment of the faculty member's performance in teaching, research and creative work, and service. The Chair should categorize contributions in each area as excellent, effective, or needs improvement in relation to department (or school/college) expectations.

Chairs and Directors should meet with the faculty member to discuss annual reviews. The annual review meeting provides an opportunity for the Chair or Director to learn about obstacles or frustrations that are impacting the faculty member's teaching, research/creative work, and/or service. The discussion should include recommendations for resources that can help faculty work towards goals or address areas of concern. The Chair or Director should direct faculty towards specific resources as appropriate (i.e., support provided by the [Faculty Development Office, ADVANCE](#), the [Center for Teaching and Learning, Ombuds, Counseling and Referral Services](#), etc.). We encourage Chairs and Directors to consult with these organizations and leaders on campus, as appropriate, to identify resources to support faculty concerns.

It is particularly important that Chairs and Directors discuss research/creative work goals with faculty and consider the impact of recent changes in federal policies and the funding landscape. These discussions should help faculty identify resources that can support their success and establish expectations that acknowledge decreased federal and foundation funding opportunities in many disciplinary areas, travel restrictions, rapidly changing agency expectations, and other changes that may impact faculty.

### **Rebuttal Process**

Faculty shall acknowledge receipt of the annual review and may provide a written response that rebuts any of the conclusions or information in the review. The rebuttal and the review are placed in the faculty member's personnel file (FHB B4.2.3 and B4.9.5).

- If faculty identify factual errors in the annual review, the Chair/Director should correct the errors and provide the faculty member with a corrected annual review.
- If faculty disagree with the evaluation of their accomplishments in the past year, the Chair or Director should be prepared to discuss the rationale for the evaluation but is not obligated to modify the review.

Per the CBA (UA-UNM Unit 1), if the disagreement persists after consultation with the Chair or Director, the faculty member may proceed to file a written grievance with the Dean (“Step One”), and may proceed to the Provost (“Step Two”) if the Dean and faculty member do not reach resolution, via the process and time constraints outlined in Section M, Article 17.

Faculty may also file grievances involving procedural concerns with the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee via the process outlined in FHB B6.

### **Milestone Reviews and Annual Reviews**

For tenure and promotion-track faculty, annual reviews must consider progress towards upcoming retention, tenure and promotion, and promotion (RPT) milestones. Formative and constructive annual reviews are critical for guiding faculty toward successful tenure and/or promotion and thus form an important component of candidates’ RPT dossiers. Reviews for all applicable years must be included in the RPT dossier. Annual reviews document the kinds of feedback candidates have received; candidates should reflect on how they have responded to this feedback in their RPT dossier. In many cases, annual review assessments will mirror assessments from the milestone review. In cases where assessments do not align, Chairs and Directors should address inconsistencies between annual and milestone reviews in their RPT letters.

### **Additional Considerations**

The scope and length of the annual review letter will depend on the faculty member’s rank as well as their progress during the previous years. In general, annual review letters for tenure track untenured faculty will be more comprehensive than those for tenured faculty.

FHB also permits discussion of “personal characteristics” as traits and conduct “that influence an individual's effectiveness as a teacher, scholar, researcher, or creative artist, and a leader in a professional area” (FHB B1.2.4). This discussion can be brief unless there is strong concern that such traits undermine contributions to teaching, research/creative work, service, or leadership. Assessment of personal characteristics “requires flexibility” (FHB B1.2.4) and should be based on facts.

Annual review letters should not mention formal grievances. The annual review process should maintain faculty confidentiality: faculty reviewers should not have access to information about any previous or ongoing grievances concerning a faculty member. Chairs and Directors should seek advice from their Deans and Associate Deans as appropriate.

Per FHB B4.9.6, departments should provide the Dean with summaries of annual reviews for all faculty members.

For tenured faculty, if annual reviews identify a “serious deficiency” in a core responsibility for two consecutive years, the Chair or Director may begin a “more complete review” as outlined in FHB B4.9.7. In such cases, Chairs and Directors should consult their Associate Deans/Deans before engaging in the more complete review.

If a Lecturer on a one-year appointment receives a negative evaluation, FHB B3.3.b.1 outlines the Chair’s (or Director’s) discretion to discontinue the contract or outline performance remediation expectations.

FHB B3.3.b.3 outlines guidelines for review of lecturers in their third year. A lecturer on a one-year contract who receives an “outstanding” review in their third year is eligible for 2-year contract.

In addition to annual reviews, the Collective Bargaining Agreement with UA-UNM requires Chairs and Directors to “annually review and approve individual academic workload expectations of each bargaining unit member” (UA-UNM Unit 1, Article 13, Section H). Chairs and Directors can combine annual review and workload expectations meetings. Note that annual reviews reflect on the previous calendar year, whereas workload agreements consider the upcoming academic year.

For faculty members with appointments in two departments/units, the Chair of the tenure home should consult the Letter of Offer for guidance on how to coordinate annual reviews. In the absence of clear guidance, the Chair of the tenure home should consult with the Chair of the other department/unit to clarify and streamline processes. Ideally, the faculty member will provide an identical set of materials to each department for review.

Faculty on sabbatical or fellowship leaves should still submit annual review materials to the Chair or Director. Annual review letters must consider any alterations to workload due to leaves. Chairs/Directors should consult with their Associate Dean and Academic Affairs for additional guidance on leaves and annual reviews.