STATEMENT OF EVALUATION STANDARDS, CRITERIA, AND PROCEDURES
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS
UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND
April 2011

I. This document is a revision of one with the same title, dated November 1999. The Faculty Code and the annual Memorandum on Faculty Evaluation from the Professional Standards Committee also discuss the evaluation process and should be consulted.

II. The mission of the Department of Physics at the University of Puget Sound is to educate undergraduate students in the fundamental ideas and methods of physics in an environment of scientific inquiry and discovery, based on a curriculum of classical and modern physics, and on theoretical and experimental methods, in order to prepare students for careers as scientists and as citizens. Faculty members of the Department affirm their commitment to excellence in teaching and to professional growth as scientists. As part of that commitment, members of the faculty participate in periodic evaluation of our colleagues, following the standards, criteria, and procedures described below, in the Faculty Code, and in the Memorandum of the Professional Standards Committee.

III. Standards and Criteria

The Department will evaluate a faculty member having the rank of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor on the basis of his or her teaching, professional growth, service, and advising. See Section V for the evaluation of Instructors.

Teaching

The Department believes that excellent teaching requires:

1. that faculty members have appropriate academic training and expertise in most of the subjects usually associated with the undergraduate physics curriculum: mechanics, optics, electronics, electromagnetic theory, quantum mechanics, and thermodynamics. Faculty should also have the range to teach courses outside their areas of expertise, including courses for non-science majors.

2. that faculty members teach their courses in ways that address fundamental issues in the discipline.

3. that faculty members communicate effectively with students, showing an ability to formulate and express ideas clearly, and an understanding of the difficulties students may have facing the ideas for the first time.
4. that faculty set high standards for students and are effective in motivating students to meet those standards.

5. that faculty encourage students to assume responsibility for their own learning, in their day-to-day course work, as well as in independent study and research.

6. that faculty are accessible to students.

The Department recognizes that a wide range of teaching styles can be effective and that not everyone teaches most effectively in exactly the same way. The Department encourages its faculty to incorporate a variety of learning and teaching techniques in their courses, such as lecture demonstrations, laboratory work, numerical simulation, expository writing, and others. The Department also encourages its faculty to develop as teachers by trying new methods in their quest to improve their teaching.

Evaluation of a colleague’s teaching effectiveness should be based on (1) that colleague’s personal statement of teaching philosophy and self-evaluation, (2) the colleague’s effectiveness in the classroom, as assessed through class visitation, (3) student course evaluations, and (4) course materials, including syllabi, assignments, and tests. The Department recognizes that important teaching also takes place outside the classroom. The faculty member’s effectiveness in informal settings may also be taken into account.

Professional Growth

The physics faculty believes that their primary mission as teachers must be supported by ongoing professional growth and active intellectual engagement with the disciplines of physics or astronomy, broadly conceived. The Department values the intellectual growth of its faculty and an atmosphere of vigorous scientific inquiry. The Department believes:

1. that a faculty member should show ongoing, professional growth throughout his or her career. Thus, a significant portion of each year should be devoted to professional growth. It is also expected that sabbatical leaves will contribute to this work.

The Department holds a broad view of professional growth, a view that includes original attempts to explore unanswered questions in physics and astronomy, and efforts to learn, through study or experiment, what others have already found. Examples of activities that contribute to professional growth include: (1) original scientific research and publication. (2) scientific research that does not necessarily lead to publication, but is presented to the scholarly community in some form. The Department recognizes that not every research project leads to a result publishable in a research journal. This is especially likely to be true of projects undertaken to develop or improve a course, or of projects designed to provide student research opportunities. The Department values such activities; but it is important that the results of such efforts be communicated in some form—whether as a paper, or a seminar or colloquium. (3) other kinds of scholarly writing and publication. These include, but are not limited to, the writing of textbooks, contributions to the literature of physics pedagogy, and science writing for the general public. (4)
participation in seminars, professional meetings or other scholarly activities that assist in maintaining one’s currency in the discipline or extend one’s expertise into a new specialty. (5) the development of new teaching methods, experiments, demonstrations, or entire courses.

2. that at each evaluation the faculty member should present written evidence of professional growth.

Examples of acceptable evidence include: Published articles or books, manuscripts submitted for publication, progress reports, proposals for funding, manuscripts in progress, detailed written descriptions of new experiments or demonstrations that have been implemented, and texts of public lectures.

3. that a faculty member should be engaged with the physics/astronomy community both at the University of Puget Sound and in the broader world outside. Engagement with the physics community at UPS contributes to the scholarly and scientific endeavors of the Department. Engagement with the physics/astronomy community outside the University fosters the intellectual growth of the individual faculty member and helps to keep the UPS Physics Department lively and up-to-date.

There are many ways of being engaged with the physics/astronomy community. They include: presenting the results of one’s research at seminars or colloquia at the University of Puget Sound, collaborating on research projects with UPS colleagues, or involving students in research. Ways of being engaged with the physics/astronomy community outside UPS include: participating in professional societies, collaborating with scientists at other institutions, presenting papers at conferences, reviewing proposals for support or papers for publication, organizing scientific meetings, and so on.

Service

Faculty members are expected to contribute to the goals of the Department and University through service on faculty committees and by sharing administrative duties. Examples of contributions are service as Department Chair, service as Dual Degree Engineering Advisor, supervising workstudy students, acting as library liaison, coordinating the Physics Seminar Series, serving as the Department representative to University public-relations functions, serving as Departmental representative on projects involving the admissions office or scholarship committees, service on departmental or University search committees. Participation in the intellectual and cultural life of the University is also a form of service. While a record of service is expected of faculty members, it is of less importance in the evaluation process than teaching or professional growth.

Advising

All members of the Physics Department are expected to participate in the University’s advising program. Effective advising requires that a faculty member be acquainted with departmental and University requirements and procedures. It also requires faculty members to
recognize the different needs of different students while striving to foster independence in all students. Effective advising will be considered in evaluations, but it is less important than teaching and professional growth.

IV. Procedures

For cases involving tenure or promotion, all tenure line members of the department are expected to participate in the evaluation. Tenure line members could be excused from service if, in the judgment of the head officer, there is compelling reason. Additionally, tenure-line faculty in their first year are encouraged to read evaluation files, but may choose not to write letters or to make formal recommendations on tenure or promotion decisions. In all other cases (except for streamlined evaluations), the head officer and a minimum of three other faculty members are required to participate in the evaluation. The head officer will appoint these three members, two of whom will be proposed by the evaluatee, in consultation with the head officer. Other departmental members are free to participate if they choose.

A. Responsibility of the individual being evaluated.

The individual being evaluated shall prepare a file containing the following material:

1. A statement regarding his or her philosophy, professional objectives, and accomplishments.

2. Samples of course materials, e.g., syllabi, assignments, and tests.

3. Written evidence of professional growth.

4. Student evaluations of all courses taught during the previous two semesters of teaching in promotion, 3-year, and 5-year evaluation cases, and during the previous 4 semesters in tenure cases.

5. Any other information the faculty member believes will be useful to the Department members and the Faculty Advancement Committee.

B. Responsibility of department colleagues in the evaluation process.

1. Colleagues participating in the evaluation shall read the file prepared by the individual.

2. Colleagues participating in the evaluation should normally observe a minimum of two classes taught by the evaluatee. These class visits should be scheduled in advance in courteous consultation with the evaluatee.
3. Each colleague participating in the evaluation shall write a letter evaluating the individual in light of the departmental needs and the criteria and standards stated in Section III.

4. Colleagues participating in the evaluation shall meet without the candidate to formulate a departmental recommendation. Individual evaluation letters must be submitted to the head officer in advance of this meeting. These letters may not be revised following this meeting; letters in addenda may be submitted to accompany the file.

5. The head officer shall inform the candidate of the results of the departmental deliberations and its recommendation to the Academic Dean and the Advancement Committee.

V. Instructors

Instructors are expected to meet the same high standards of teaching expected of assistant, associate, and full professors. However, the expectations for professional growth are not the same. A level of study and professional involvement is expected, as required to maintain currency in areas related to the instructor’s teaching responsibilities. Instructors are expected to serve the Department by sharing equally in those departmental duties related to the teaching program, such as design of laboratory experiments, preparation of lecture demonstrations, curriculum revision, and so on. Instructors are also expected to participate effectively in the University’s advising program.

The procedures for evaluation of an instructor are the same as those described in Section IV.