

SAC Sub-Committee Questions 2015 - 2016

Procedure:

1. The candidate's CV is not in standard UBC format and some of the standard information bearing on teaching has been omitted. Specifically: Section 8(b) of the CV does not provide the usual table detailing the term and the year for each course, the class sizes, and the numbers of contact hours. Instead, the CV briefly summarizes only part of this information. To more fully document the candidate's teaching, we are requesting a completed version of the standard UBC formatted Table 8(b).

Scholarly Activity:

2. For the granting of tenure and promotion, what are the disciplinary norms regarding the quantity of publications, and the scholarly impact of those publications? Also, what are the normative expectations regarding invited presentations and grant support? Again, we are asking about general norms and expectations and not comparisons with specific individuals.
3. You wrote that the candidate “has not been consistently publishing in journals with high impact factors” and “the majority of her/his publications appear in journals with impact factors less than 5”. The candidate’s CV does include publications with IF’s ranging from 7.5 to 15.1. Furthermore, several of her/his publications in journals with IF’s below 5 are, nonetheless, well-cited. Given this evidence, could you elaborate on any concerns regarding the quality and impact of the candidate’s scholarly activity?
4. External referee wrote: “[The candidate’s] work has not appeared in the traditionally very high impact journals such as Science and Nature is, I believe, a reflection of the reluctance of these journals to publish studies based on XXXX, rather than a reflection of the quality and importance of the work that [the candidate] has pursued.” To what extent did you take this opinion into account when considering the extent to which journal impact factor was diagnostic of the quality of the candidate’s scholarly work?
5. In offering a conclusion about the candidate’s scholarly work, your letter states that the candidate’s “publication record is not of the standard that I would expect for promotion to Associate Professor or for the awarding of tenure.” In arriving at this overall assessment, how much weight did you assign to the quantity of publications versus the apparent quality of that published work? And in judging quality, how much did you weigh journal impact factor, actual citation counts, and the opinions of the external referees?
6. The external referees unanimously express the judgment that this candidate’s scholarly work meets UBC standards for tenure and for promotion to Associate Professor. What was the role of external referees’ assessments in shaping your assessment?
7. What is the basis for the doubts about the candidate’s potential for future funding and overall promise (4.01 high standard of performance... and promise) as required for tenure?
8. The letter to the candidate expressed concerns about limited productivity arising from the candidate’s CIHR grant, and states that one would “normally expect to see a higher/his level of productivity.” The candidate took a parental leave, year three of her/his five year CIHR award. To what extent was this leave taken into account? In considering this concern, to what extent did you take into account the unpublished papers that the candidate apparently has in the pipeline (i.e., under review or in preparation)?

9. What level of mentoring did the candidate receive regarding expectations for scholarly productivity?
10. Aspects of the candidate's research profile -- including frequent co-authorship with a specific senior collaborator -- gave rise to questions regarding contributions as an independent scholar. Although several parts of the file directly addressed those questions (e.g., the external referees' letters attest to candidate's own national reputation), three members were apparently unconvinced and voted against both promotion and tenure. Could you elaborate further on the specific reasons why multiple members remained unconvinced regarding the candidate's independent scholarly productivity? And could you elaborate further on the key pieces of information that convinced you otherwise?
11. What are the key pieces of evidence supporting your judgment that the candidate's productivity continues to be 'sustained'? To more transparently document sustained productivity, it would be helpful if SAC could be provided with additional information regarding the specific years during which the candidate engaged in activities or attained accomplishments that qualify as 'meritorious professional contributions' (i.e., evidence of 'leadership, rare expertise or outstanding stature'; Sect. 3.1.18 in SAC Guide).
12. Related to the research profile, referee Dr. XX indicated that the candidate 'is regularly invited to speak or chair sessions at national or international meetings.' However, the locations of invited presentations or meetings are missing from the CV. Which of the invitations were national or international, as opposed to local, and how should the pattern of invitations be understood in relationship to evidence of the candidate's impact and reputation?
13. The referees, while uniformly supporting promotion, provided somewhat mixed assessments regarding the extent to which the candidate had achieved an international reputation (a criterion for promotion to Professor; SAC Guide Sect. 3.1.19). What evidence persuaded you that the candidate does indeed have an international reputation?

Teaching:

14. Please provide annual teaching scores for each class, along with appropriate comparisons from the faculty or department. This wasn't an issue for the classroom teaching where the scores are super, but is more of a concern for the PBL where the scores appear to be decent.
15. In order for SAC to carefully evaluate whether this candidate has demonstrated the "ability to direct graduate students," it would be helpful to have a clearer sense of the relevant disciplinary norms and expectations. For the granting of tenure and promotion, what are the departmental normative expectations regarding supervision of graduate students and other highly qualified personnel? Please bear in mind that, in asking about normative expectations, we are simply asking about departmental means and ranges, as well as expectations. We aren't seeking comparisons with specific individuals within the department. In responding, it would be best to avoid providing details regarding any specific individuals other/his than the candidate.
16. The case file offers evidence that would appear to indicate some successful supervision of graduate students. For example, one MSc student published a first-authored and a co-authored refereed paper with the candidate; the candidate's informal supervision of two additional graduate students resulted in two additional publications with the candidate as senior author. It is stated that the candidate "has not demonstrated 'ability to direct graduate students' to the extent required." Could you please elaborate on your last clause ("to the extent required")? Does the candidate show potential in graduate supervision? If not, why not?

17. What barriers, if any, limited the candidate's opportunity to supervise graduate students? For example, did the nature of a grant tenure appointment result in uncertainty about future employment, which may have played a role in the candidate's ability to serve as primary supervisor? What, if anything, was done to address any such barriers? What opportunities for graduate supervision were present? More generally, what mentoring did the candidate receive regarding recruitment of graduate students?
18. According to the Collective Agreement (3.2.1), "Teaching includes all activities by which students, whether in degree or non-degree programs sponsored by the University, derive educational benefit. This may include lectures, seminars and tutorials, individual and group discussion, supervision of individual students' work (undergraduate and graduate), or other means." The case file offers evidence bearing on this specified range of teaching and supervisory activities. For example: The candidate's research assistants are first authors on refereed publications #28 and #30; several undergraduate research assistants are coauthors of #30, on papers in progress, or on conference poster abstracts. Two undergraduate assistants received awards. Peer evaluations and student comments were positive. In what ways did you take these pieces of evidence into account when judging that the candidate has not demonstrated "successful teaching beyond that expected for an Assistant Professor"?
19. The dossier states "Her/his scores are consistent with those of her/his peers. They are generally above four out of 5 in the various scales and have demonstrated some improvement from averages of 4.2 to 4.8 over the past 3 years." To document the improvement and the context, please provide annual teaching scores for each of these classes, along with appropriate comparisons from the faculty or department.
20. We are requesting additional details concerning SPROT's summary of student evaluations. In order to help SAC judge how the candidate's evaluations compare to expected norms we request mean instructor effectiveness scores (e.g., responses to University Module Q6 or equivalent if a different questionnaire was used) for each of the teaching activities (i.e., GI Clinical Skills Physical Exam and seminars on colorectal disease) that the candidate taught each year, along with information regarding Departmental/Faculty norms (such as average scores across instructors for similar courses or type of teaching each year). Blank copies of the questionnaires used would also help SAC members interpret the SPROT report for courses where the typical UBC SEOT questionnaire was not used.
21. What is the contribution of the candidate to direction of graduate students at UBC? The candidate co-supervised M.Sc. graduate students during his doctoral program. More recently the candidate co-supervised PhD students but it is not completely clear what the relationship of the students to UBC had been. Clarification on the nature of the supervision and of the home institutions of the students would be helpful in evaluating this case.
22. We are also requesting clarification about the quantitative summary of teaching. The CV and addenda indicate ~XX hours of "hours taught" from XXXX-XXXX. However, the SPROT states that "Over the past XX years at UBC, Dr. ... has contributed to classroom teaching in multiple courses [...] for a total of XX hours." What were the factors that contributed to the SPROT estimate?
23. In your letter, you state that the candidate "has taught an average of xxx hours per year of scheduled undergraduate teaching." This amount of teaching appears to fall substantially below the minimum expectation. Your letter goes on to say that the candidate "has compensated for this by exceeding the norms for postgraduate instruction" and by providing "approximately xxx hours per year of unscheduled teaching." Could you explain further the extent to which unscheduled teaching is or isn't equivalent to scheduled teaching in the Faculty of Medicine? And could you also explain further how postgraduate

instruction can compensate for deficiencies in scheduled undergraduate instruction (given that the norm is expressed as “a minimum of xxx hours of scheduled undergraduate teaching each year *and* to actively participate in the education of graduate and postgraduate learners”)?

24. Although the candidate’s CV identifies various kinds of contact with post-graduate students, the nature of that contact is not completely clear. To help document the candidate's “ability to direct graduate students,” what is the evidence for the impact of the candidate's supervisory relationships and/or intellectual guidance? How confident are you that the candidate has met this criterion for promotion? What pieces of information were most compelling in persuading you that the candidate has indeed demonstrated the ability to direct graduate students?

Letters of Reference:

25. Although not the reason for deferral, we wanted to point out that the brief background justification for selecting each referee that is usually part of the package (following SAC guide recommendations for the Head's Letter) is not included, and supplying it now would be an option open to the Dean.