



# Guide to Writing Personal Statements

School of Medicine Promotion and Tenure

*This guide is for faculty who are submitting personal statements to the*

*SoM Promotion and Tenure Committee [Professorial Series] OR*

*Sub-Committee for Instructor Advancement [Instructional to Professorial Series]*

The Personal Statement summarizes a faculty member's career. It is used (along with other parts of the portfolio such as the Curriculum Vitae, Educator's Portfolio, and Letters of Support) by the OHSU School of Medicine Promotion and Tenure committee to assist with determining the level of a faculty member's accomplishment in scholarship, teaching, and service. When written well, the personal statement can significantly help the committee to understand the local, regional, or national impact of the candidate's work.

## What you need to know:

The committee readers of your personal statement may not have any framework to understand what you do in your day-to-day work (the P&T committee is comprised of various faculty with differing degrees and from different disciplines and specialties). Thus, be very clear in explaining the ways you have contributed and why they are important.

- The faculty reading your personal statement won't necessarily understand the work that you do. The personal statement explains the work and creates a narrative of your career.
- A personal statement is most helpful when it is well organized, concise and clear and in the form of a story about your career.
- When telling the story, you should think about: what you do and why you do it, and based on these, what you have done to warrant promotion.

## The format:

- **The length** should be limited to
  - **[Instructional to Professorial Series] Assistant Professor:** 2-3 pages
  - **Associate Professor:** 3 pages
  - **Professor:** 3-5 pages
  - Candidates explaining complex concepts or who have worked previously at other institutions may need longer personal statements, however, even in these cases, try not to exceed 5 pages.
- **Introduction:**
  - A short introductory paragraph outlining your level of accomplishment in each of the areas and what rank you seek.
  - Example 1st paragraph:
    - **[Professorial Series]** *I respectfully request consideration for promotion to ... I believe my contributions in scholarship are (sat/sub/out), in teaching are (sat/sub/out), and in service are (sat/sub/out).*
    - **[Instructional to Professorial Series]** *I respectfully request consideration for appointment to Assistant Professor. I believe my contributions in scholarship are (sat/sub/out), and in teaching are (sat/sub/out), and that my overall portfolio identifies me as likely to be successful in the professorial series.*
- **Body:**
  - **Organized into the three sections**, one section for each of the domain categories of promotion, sequenced such that the category with the greatest accomplishments is first.
    - **1st section:** About scholarship
    - **2nd section:** About teaching
    - **3rd section:** About service

- NOTE: Omit any section which is not required for the promotion category you seek (example: Research Track would only have a Scholarship section).
- **[Instructional to Professorial Series]** NOTE: While one's contributions to service are not a specific criteria for consideration for appointment into the professorial series, it will be strategic to include a section on service, as these contributions may provide justification for one's likelihood to succeed in the professorial series.
- Use section headings to guide structure; labeled by domain with your own assessment of 'level of contribution'. E.g. for Associate Professor:
  - Teaching (Substantial)
  - Service (Satisfactory)
  - Scholarship (Satisfactory)
- Each section should justify your assessment and *sell* the reader on why you meet the (sat/sub/out) criteria.
- The length of the sections:
  - Strive for no more than ½ page for the two areas that are not in question and not more than two pages for the main promotion domain, which may need the most reinforcement. Within that one area, subheadings that reviewers can use as bullet point statements also would be helpful – give reviewers something they can cut and paste into their reviews in the same way that we try to give grant reviewers bullet points about why our research is wonderful and highly impactful.
- **[Instructional to Professorial Series]** Faculty requesting consideration of appointment into the professorial series from the instructional series.
  - The general instructions are similar to the remainder of this document; however the personal statement may vary in that a 2-3 page document may be sufficient in outlining one's contributions to scholarship and/or teaching.
  - One should make a point of emphasizing how one's past contributions to scholarship, teaching or service display a likelihood to thrive and advance in the professorial series.
- **Conclusion/Summary**
  - Include a summary statement, similar to your introduction statement summarizing and re-affirming your assessment. E.g.:
    - **[Professorial Series]** *In summary, based on the above noted contributions to teaching (e.g. Substantial), service (e.g. Substantial), and Scholarship (e.g. Satisfactory), I respectfully submit my application for consideration of promotion to ( ) Professor of ( ).*
    - **[Instructional to Professorial Series]** *In summary, based on the above noted contributions to teaching (e.g. Satisfactory), Scholarship (e.g. Satisfactory), and service, and a portfolio that I believe identifies me as likely to be successful in the professorial series, I respectfully submit my application for consideration of Appointment to Assistant Professor of ( ).*

### Recommendations:

The average CV does not speak for itself, the personal statement is used to augment the CV. The personal statement should demonstrate why you meet the criteria for appointment or promotion:

- Utilize the personal statement to explain unusual aspects of your job that are not evident in the CV or Educator Portfolio.
- Utilize the personal statement to demonstrate the impact your work has had locally, regionally, or nationally – provide examples.
- Explain the impact of the scholarship especially if it is not the traditional peer-reviewed type (how have others utilized the products of your scholarship? what changes occurred as a result of the product? etc.)
- The majority of the writing should focus on the area that is key for promotion. For example, if promotion is to associate and there really is no doubt that two of the categories are satisfactory, then the emphasis in the statement should be on why the third is substantial.
- Use and be consistent with the language and wording of the OHSU guidelines for promotion to evaluate levels of accomplishment (“My accomplishments in teaching are substantial, because...”). Thus if one is appraising oneself as Substantial in a domain, avoid superlative language (e.g. outstanding), as that language is more aligned with the Outstanding-level assessment. This will make it easy for the committee member to reconcile your points with the guidelines for promotion.

**Things to avoid:**

- The personal statement should not just be a re-iteration of the CV. Give the highlights, and explain why entries are important. Explain the nuances of what you contributed to a project rather than just listing all the committees you performed.
- Keep it brief, focus on highlighting your specific and notable contributions in each domain, with an emphasis on why your work meets the specific performance assessment for each domain.
- Avoid rambling and regurgitation. Organize your story within the 3 categories. Alternatively, candidates can choose the story method or the bulleted "Power Point" like points.
- Avoid bitterness or statements regarding the politics of the institution/department.
- Do not assume that the reader understands abbreviations or highly technical terms. Either define them, or leave them out.
- Use the criteria to define your achievements honestly. (For example: if you meet the criteria for 'satisfactory' achievement avoid phrasing your work as 'outstanding')
  - This is NOT the time to be modest - Don't undersell your work.
  - Avoid arrogance - Don't over sell your work.