ABSTRACT

The ADVANCE Project CREST Team organized a qualitative coding analysis of available tenured/tenure-track faculty annual review documents at UCCS in Fall 2022. The documents were coded for equity-minded practice using a rubric inspired by the *Equity-Minded Reform of Faculty Evaluation Policies Audit Resource* (American Council on Education, 2022). Specific attention was given to transparency; accountability; context; holistic assessment; and considerations of teaching, research and creative works, grant activity, and service and leadership. Results of the coding analysis suggest the strongest equity-minded practice occurs in the areas of transparency and holistic assessment at UCCS. Equity-minded recommendations are provided to help units improve and strengthen their annual review guidelines and criteria.

ADVANCE

PROJECT CREST

Changing **R**esearch **E**xperiences **S**tructures and (in)**T**olerance through the Adaptation of Promising Equity Practices

Faculty Annual Review Criteria at UCCS: Fostering Greater Equity-Minded Practice

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Background

Annual faculty evaluations must be completed fairly and equitably to ensure the vital work faculty performs for our university, our students, and our disciplines is given proper credit. While annual reviews are an opportunity to celebrate faculty achievements, identify areas to strengthen, and plan for a successful year to come, they can also be riddled with hasty judgments, ambiguity, indifference, and distrust, which can affect faculty productivity, job satisfaction, and advancement. Thus, the guidelines and criteria for annual review must be transparent, context-rich, and comprehensive to account for all the ways faculty engage in teaching, research and creative works, institution building, service and leadership (e.g., Mathew, 2018; Niemann et al., 2020; Skewes et al., 2019). Equally, attention must be afforded to the ways in which valued faculty work is often gendered and racialized (e.g., Bird et al., 2004; Croom, 2017; Domingo et al., 2022).

To explore the manner in which equity-minded practice is embedded in UCCS annual review documents, a qualitative coding analysis was conducted in Fall 2022 with all available unit-level tenured/tenure-track annual review documents. The documents were coded for equity-minded practice using *The Project CREST Annual Review Coding Rubric for Equity*[1] (see Appendix, Table 1).

This rubric attends to areas of:
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Context
- Holistic assessment
- Considerations of teaching
- Considerations of research and creative works
- Considerations of grant activity
- Considerations of service and leadership

Method

DATA COLLECTION

In Fall 2022, annual review documents in 29 UCCS units were available for examination from 5 of the 6 colleges at UCCS: [2]
- Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences
- College of Business
- College of Engineering and Applied Science
- College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences
- College of Public Service

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[1] Adapted from the *Equity-Minded Reform of Faculty Evaluation Policies Audit Resource* published by the American Council of Education (ACE) in 2022. The *Audit Resource* outlines principle- and policy-related questions institutions should consider when creating faculty evaluation policies and procedures. It is intended for use in conjunction with another ACE report, *Translating Equity-Minded Principles into Faculty Evaluation Reform* (O'Meara et al., 2022).

[2] The Kraemer Family Library and the College of Education were not reviewed.

CODING

Three coders—a professor external to UCCS, a UCCS graduate research assistant, and a Project CREST team member—independently examined and coded all 29 annual review documents using *The Project CREST Annual Review Coding Rubric for Equity*. The goal was to have people from very different perspectives read and interpret the documents. **Statements were scored from 0 = Absent, 1 = Addressed but room for improvement, and 2 = Fully addressed,** with higher scores indicating greater equity-minded practice. We calculated the average score from the three coders on each of the 41 rubric statements.

Overall Results

SUMMARY OF CAMPUS-LEVEL RESULTS

The results of the qualitative coding analysis for campus are presented in Figure 1 and will be discussed in descending order of mean ratings of the coders and will emphasize the items under each construct that were rated the highest. Overall, the strongest equity-minded practice occurred in the areas of transparency (*M* = 1.41, *SD* = 0.45) and holistic assessment (*M* = 1.41, *SD* = 0.35). Regarding **transparency**, the coders viewed the annual review documents as generally understandable and well-organized for faculty to determine the distinction between that which is considered to be meeting expectations, exceeding expectations, and outstanding. Under **holistic assessment**, the highest rated items under this construct indicate units are welcoming and open to a variety of ways in which faculty conduct their work and count this variety broadly. For instance, an overreliance does not appear to be present on numeric metrics (e.g., journal impact factors, FCQ ratings) or achievement awards dictating the rankings. Also, faculty are given the opportunity to share the way in which their work contributes to their unit and college, as well as to the university.

The results below indicate that Transparency and Holistic Assessment are the strongest aspects in most criteria

Figure 1 - *Annual Review Coding Rubric Results by Construct for Campus*
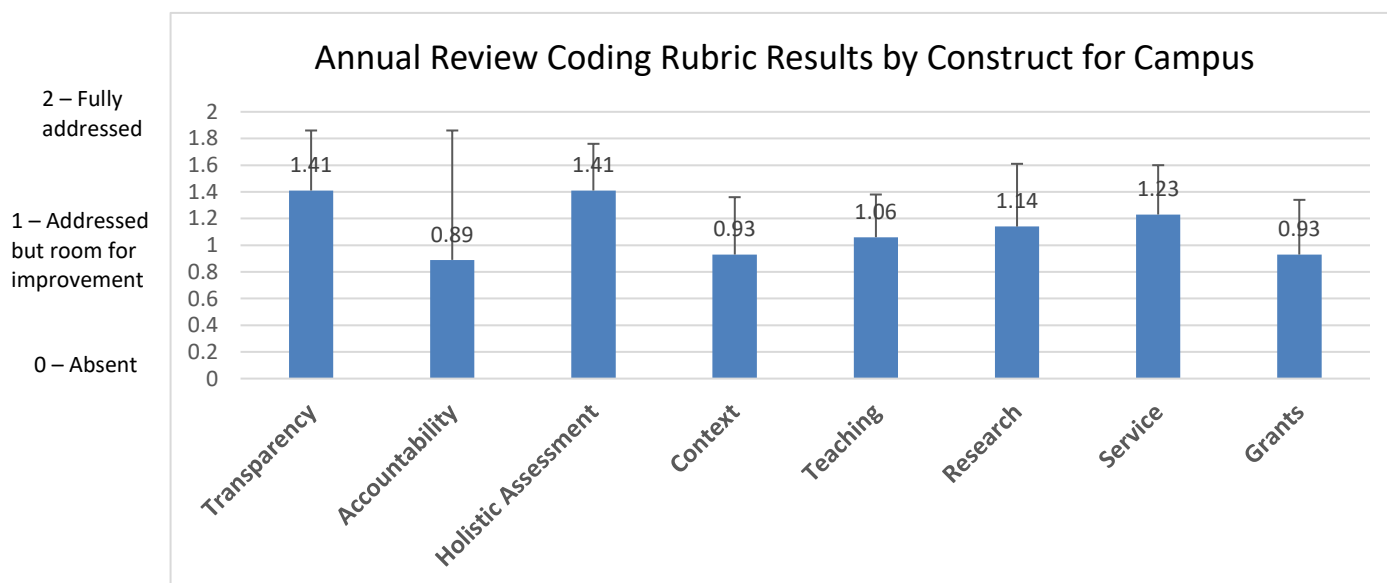
Note. The average rating from the three coders is presented; *ICC* = 0.893; Cronbach's α = 0.893.

***Service and leadership* considerations** (*M* = 1.23, *SD* = 0.37) also were rated on the higher end but closer to being not fully addressed. Most units articulate a high valuing of service to the campus and their disciplines, as well as recognize the importance of leadership over purely membership. ***Research and creative works* considerations** (*M* = 1.14, *SD* = 0.35) followed behind service and leadership considerations. The highest rated items under this construct signified units recognize a broad set of research and creative works products and expected peer-reviewed publications. Next, ***teaching* considerations** (*M* = 1.06, *SD* = 0.32) were rated closest to being not fully addressed, but the highest rated items demonstrated units value innovation in teaching and tend to consider peer-review ratings as an essential component to evaluate teaching.

The coders rated ***grant activity considerations*** (*M* = 0.93, *SD* = 0.41) on the lower end. The highest-rated item under this construct indicated units tend to recognize grant submissions along with grant awards. ***Context*** (*M* = 0.93, *SD* = 0.43) followed, the highest rated item indicated faculty are given the opportunity to explain the significance of their work during the annual review process. **Accountability** (*M* = 0.89, *SD* = 0.97) was rated the lowest, signifying most units failed to identify an appeals process within their documents.

Results by Type of Discipline

The results of the qualitative coding analysis by discipline are presented in Figure 2, see also Table 2 in the Appendix.

- For the construct of **transparency**: social/behavioral sciences (SBS) unit documents were coded as having the most transparent elements, followed closely by humanities, and then STEM and professional programs.
- For the construct of **accountability**: professional program documents were coded as having the most accountability elements such as information on how to dispute a rating, followed by SBS, STEM, and humanities.
- For the construct of **holistic assessment**: SBS documents were rated as having the greatest presence of criteria that consider a broad range of valued work, for example DEI, community and policy work, followed closely by STEM and humanities, and then professional programs.
- For the construct of **context**: STEM documents were coded as having the greatest presence of contextual considerations such as considering life disruptions, information about expectations for rank and sabbaticals, followed by SBS, humanities, and professional programs.
- For the construct of **teaching considerations**: SBS, STEM, and humanities documents were all rated similarly high in containing criteria that included different modes of instructions and articulation of evaluation measures, followed by professional programs.
- For the construct of **research and creative works considerations**: humanities documents were coded as having the most articulated elements for how research/creative work is valued such as collaborative projects, authorship expectations and inclusion of students, followed closely by SBS and STEM, and then professional programs.
- For the construct of **service and leadership considerations**: SBS documents were coded as containing the most explicit articulation of the types and amounts of service that are valued followed by STEM, professional programs, and humanities.
- For the construct of **grant activity considerations**: professional program documents were rated as having the most explicit mention of the various ways grant submissions, awards, and consulting roles are considered, followed by STEM, SBS, and humanities.

Each discipline had strengths and areas for improvement. SBS unit documents received the majority of positive ratings whereas professional program documents generally had the most room for improvement.

Figure 2 - *Annual Review Coding Rubric Results by Construct for Discipline*
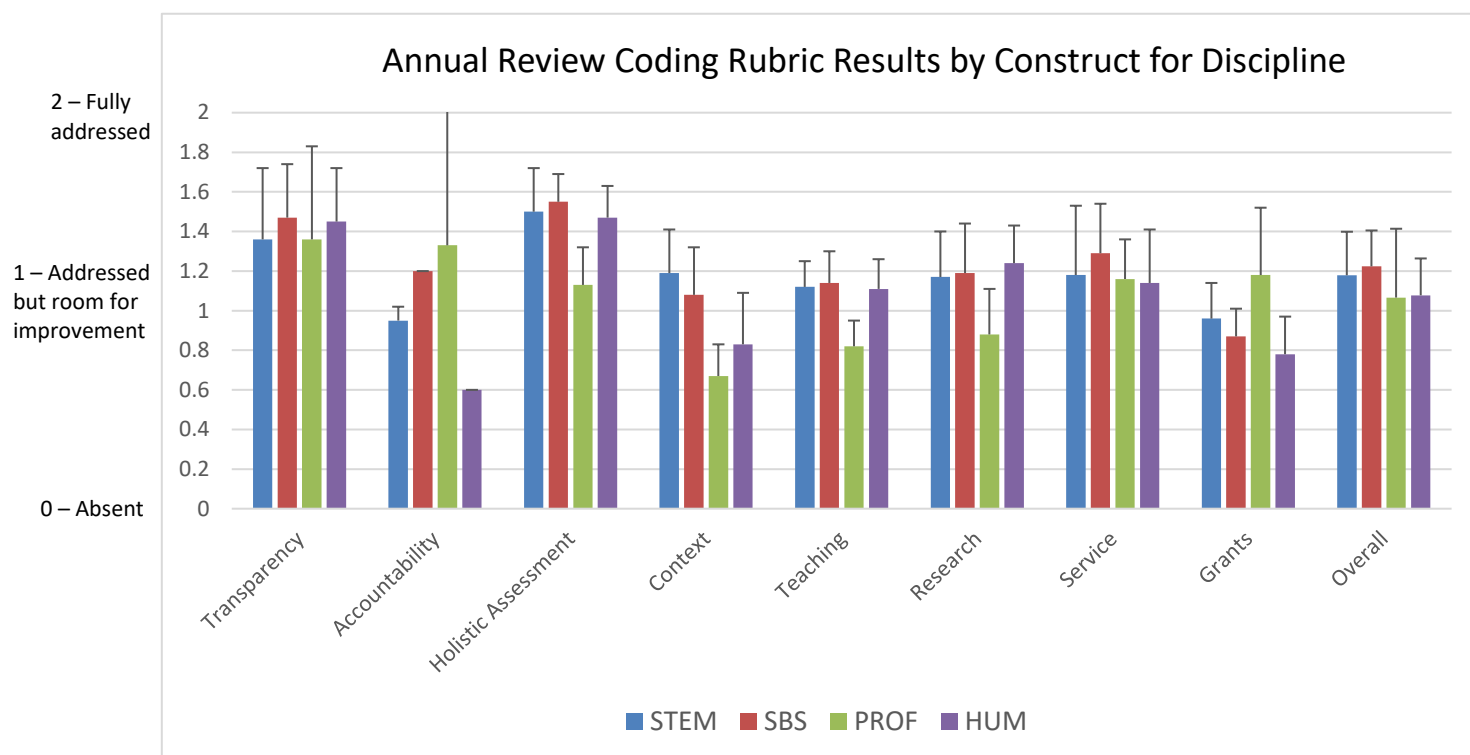
DEPARTMENTAL DISCIPLINE GROUPINGS

STEM = Biology, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Physics, Geography and Environmental Studies, Mathematics, Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Social/Behavioral Sciences (SBS) = Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology

Professional Programs (Prof) = Business, Nursing and Health Sciences, Public Affairs, Technical Communication and Information Design. The units within the College of Education were not included (as they had not yet started creating their annual review criteria documents).

Humanities/Arts (Hum) = Communications, English, History, Languages and Cultures, Philosophy, Visual and Performing Arts, and Women's and Ethnic Studies

Recommendations for Greater Equity-Minded Criteria

Transparency

Eliminate ambiguity in the annual review guidelines and criteria. Additionally, clearly identify that which constitutes the ranking of meeting expectations, exceeding expectations, and outstanding, along with multiple ways to achieve these rankings.

Accountability

Along with ensuring a full appeals process is outlined within annual review documents, a commitment to applying the criteria consistently across all faculty is warranted. Also, delineating the responsible actors and the anticipated timeline for review would improve criteria. Moreover, indicating a regular review cycle for the annual review guidelines and criteria is valuable (e.g., every three years).

Holistic Assessment

Recognizing that the nature of faculty work can vary widely within a unit promotes a more holistic evaluation of faculty work (e.g. interdisciplinary work, community-based work, or DEI work). Including a goal-setting process within the annual review process promotes intentional and purposeful planning for the future.

Context

Units should provide ways to bring relevant life and work contexts into the review process, which could include significant life transitions, such as the birth of a child, or differentiated workload agreements and sabbaticals Additionally, greater consideration must be given to the realities and pressures of faculty across ranks in prioritizing teaching, research and creative works, and service and leadership demands.

Teaching Considerations

Criteria should account for faculty engaged in different modes of instruction, the availability of teaching assistants, class size, class level, and the number of new preps in a given year. Clearer articulation the peer-review process and recognition informal and formal student advising/mentoring/reference letter writing would benefit criteria documents.

Research and Creative Work Considerations

Units should define discipline-specific research and creative works and recognize pedagogy-related topics as a form of scholarship. Units should also define authorship expectations. Increasing attention to this area of research and creative works may illuminate whether and how collaborative work with faculty and students is credited.

Grant Activity Considerations

Criteria should distiguish PI, Co-PI, evaluator, or consultant roles in weighing quality of grant activity. Units should recognize the time and effort of administering, carrying out, and closing out grants or specify the type of funding valued in the unit.

Service/ Leadership Considerations

Units should articulate that which is considered an appropriate amount of service. A few units indicate fewer service commitments are expected of pre-tenure faculty, but *fewer* is vague when no standard is set. Also, recognizing the time and effort that goes into faculty mentoring, and compensated service work should be accounted for in criteria.

Next Steps

The annual review documents at UCCS are essential documents that convey the norms, values, and expectations for faculty work and faculty success. By and large, the documents at UCCS are doing well to convey transparency and consider a holistic assessment.

Within disciplines, professional programs have the most room for improvement to strengthen their tenured/tenure-track annual review guidelines and criteria at UCCS. This might be due to most professional programs already having established criteria that likely reflect historical understandings of criteria versus other disciplines that did not have any annual merit criteria previously, thus having to start from scratch. These disciplines with support from Project CREST, were best prepared to consider equity-minded practices as they developed criteria. Nonetheless, there is much room for improvement in annual review criteria in most disciplines particularly around context, grant activity, and teaching.

For most units, the annual review documents analyzed for this project will be implemented for the first time in Spring 2023, so we encourage units to:
- Study the outcomes of their process and ratings (and any associated merit pay that follows). Patterns in the data must be explored, and critical questions must be asked and answered about any inequitable patterns that emerge.
- Consideration also must be given to combat any historical and contemporary disciplinary biases that may be revealed in the data, particularly along gender and racial/ethnic lines.
- Consider using the individual unit feedback provided by Project CREST to revise unit annual review criteria documents. There are no rules for when and how often criteria can be revisted, so consider making improvements where and when possible.
- Use the *UCCS Annual Review Criteria and Process Toolkit* (Smith et al., 2021) which provides ideas and tools for engaging inclusive discussions with faculty around annual review guidelines and criteria, as well as links to CU Regent mandates regarding annual review criteria and other relevant CU Regent policy and CU administrative statements.
- We invite you to use *The Project CREST Annual Review Coding Rubric for Equity* to evaluate your unit's annual review documents and connect with the Project CREST team for any assistance as you continue to improve and strengthen guidelines and criteria.

In Closing

As we collectively work toward this effort, we cannot lose sight of the individuals behind the process. We must remember that a faculty member's record often reflects the opportunities available to them and not their work ethic or quality of work—utilizing an asset-based lens rather than a deficit-based lens for the evaluation of faculty work is imperative. Disrupting structural inequalities that emerge in annual review documents and outcomes and fostering system-level change through inclusive policies and practices is critical to UCCS charting its path forward. We invite conversations and additional refinement of existing documents to ensure equity-minded practice is at the core of evaluating faculty work at UCCS. Because we must. Because we should. Because it matters.

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Appendix

Table 1 – *The Project CREST Annual Review Coding Rubric for Equity*

Annual Review Coding Rubric for Equity
Scoring: 0 = Absent   1 = Addressed but Room for Improvement   2 = Fully Addressed

1: Transparency
1.1 The criteria are easily understood (i.e., no ambiguity could invite bias or misinterpretation).
1.2 The criteria are well-organized such that what meets expectations, exceeds expectations, and is outstanding is clear.

2: Accountability
2.1 The criteria identify an appeal process.

3: Context
3.1 The criteria provide ways to bring relevant life contexts into the review (e.g., significant transitions/ disruptions).
3.2 The criteria provide ways to bring relevant work contexts into the review (e.g., differentiated workloads, sabbatical leave of absence).
3.3 The criteria account for expected professional and collegial behavior.
3.4 The criteria consider faculty rank to determine meeting expectations, etc., in teaching/research/service.
3.5 The criteria include processes for faculty to explain the significance of their work.

4: Holistic Assessment
4.1 The criteria are welcoming and open to multiple ways of conducting and engaging in teaching/research/ service.
4.2 The criteria promote a holistic assessment of teaching/research/service, rather than an overreliance on numeric metrics (e.g., FCQs, impact factor of journals, amount of grant dollars).
4.3 The criteria consider the ways in which faculty work contributes to the overall mission and goals of the unit/college/university across teaching/research/service.
4.4 The criteria recognize the different demands of a faculty member's type of teaching/research/service (e.g., interdisciplinary, collaborative, international, community-based).
4.5 The criteria value and recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion work within teaching/research/service.
4.6 The criteria acknowledge an achievement award is optional, but not necessary, to receive a rating of outstanding in teaching/research/service.
4.7 The criteria include an explicit statement about using the annual review process to map out future goals.

5: Teaching Considerations
5.1 The criteria account for faculty engaged in different modes of instruction (e.g., in-person, online, hybrid).
5.2 The criteria recognize innovation in teaching (e.g., development of new courses, use of high-impact practices).
5.3 The criteria account for the availability of a teaching assistant, class size, class level, and the number of new preps in a given year.
5.4 The criteria indicate the evaluation of teaching includes a peer-review process, and the process is articulated.
5.5 The criteria recognize faculty engaged in student advising/mentoring informally and formally (e.g., lab supervision, independent study, thesis/dissertation membership).
5.6 The criteria seek student input to evaluate advising/mentoring quality.
5.7 The criteria consider writing student reference/recommendation letters as a valuable teaching activity.

6: Research and Creative Works Considerations

6.1 The criteria provide a broad definition of research and creative works.

6.2 The criteria recognize a broad set of research and creative works products over specific types.

6.3 The criteria recognize faculty who publish on pedagogy-related topics as scholarship.

6.4 With the expansion of pay-to-publish outlets and predatory journals, the criteria clearly state peer-reviewed publications are expected.

6.5 The criteria recognize alternative products and venues for dissemination of scholarship (e.g., podcasts, blogs, social media, webinars).

6.6 The criteria recognize the value of varied publication outlets, venues, and presses to reach a broad audience.

6.7 The criteria define authorship expectations (e.g., author order, number of co-authors, publishing with an advisor).

6.8 The criteria explicitly value collaborative work with fellow faculty.

6.9 The criteria explicitly value collaborative work with undergraduate and/or graduate students.

7: Grant Activity Considerations

7.1 The criteria recognize grant submissions along with grant awards.

7.2 The criteria recognize PI, Co-PI, evaluator, and consultant roles.

7.3 The criteria recognize the time and effort of administering, carrying out, and closing out grants.

7.4 The criteria specify the type of funding that is valued (e.g., external vs. internal, award amount, research vs. teaching vs. workforce development).

8: Service and Leadership Considerations

8.1 The criteria articulate the value of campus service, define it, and delineate what is considered an appropriate amount.

8.2: The criteria articulate the value of disciplinary service, define it, and delineate what is considered an appropriate amount.

8.3 The criteria value high service levels to the unit/college/university.

8.4 The criteria value leadership over membership in service roles.

8.5 The criteria value efforts related to mentoring faculty within and outside the university.

8.6 The criteria account for compensated service work.

Table 2 - *Annual Review Coding Rubric Results by Construct for Discipline*

Construct	STEM		Social/Behavioral Sciences		Humanities		Professional Programs	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Transparency	1.36	0.36	1.47	0.27	1.45	0.27	1.36	0.47
Accountability	0.95	0.07	1.20	0.00	0.60	0.00	1.33	1.06
Context	1.19	0.22	1.08	0.24	0.83	0.26	0.67	0.16
Holistic Assessment	1.50	0.22	1.55	0.14	1.47	0.16	1.13	0.19
Teaching Considerations	1.12	0.13	1.14	0.16	1.11	0.15	0.82	0.13
Research and Creative Works Considerations	1.17	0.23	1.19	0.25	1.24	0.19	0.88	0.23
Grant Activity Considerations	0.96	0.18	0.87	0.14	0.78	0.19	1.18	0.34
Service and Leadership Considerations	1.18	0.35	1.29	0.25	1.14	0.27	1.16	0.20