

# Digitizing academic review and promotion

Learn how a college at Kuwait University automated its academic evaluation processes to improve efficiency, consistency and transparency.





Founded in 1966, Kuwait University has 17 colleges offering 76 undergraduate programs along with 71 graduate programs. Kuwait's first public institution of higher education and research, the institution employs around 1,500 faculty members and serves approximately 45,000 students. The university's College of Engineering and Petroleum (COEP) was established in 1974 and strives to keep pace with scientific and technological progress across the globe.

In order to reduce the administrative burden on both faculty and staff members, COEP sought a way to automate promotion and contract renewal processes across departments. The college decided to implement Interfolio to drive efficiency and consistency in its academic review processes while eliminating the need for multiple copies, folders, and physical storage space. The results have been positive for all stakeholders, ensuring that materials are available to the right people at the right times and creating transparency around promotion and renewal cases.

### Themes discussed:

- Automating Academic Evaluation Processes
- Empowering Faculty With Flexible Technology
- Increasing Transparency for Stakeholders



## Automating Academic Evaluation Processes

When Professor Maytham Safar was appointed as Head of the Promotion Committee at COEP, the Dean took him to the assistant who was going to support him on the administrative side. “He opened her office, and I was not able to see her. Not because she wasn’t there—because she was buried under the folders that they were using. Everything was done on paper.”

Recognizing the need for automation, Safar launched Interfolio Review, Promotion & Tenure (RPT) at COEP. “Within two months, the team at Interfolio was able to do all the processes that we had, and we had it into testing,” he shared. “Within three months, we went live at our college.” Safar also noted that within the first two years that they were running the system, most of the other colleges within the university reached out to him to learn more.

Two years after greenlighting the implementation of Interfolio RPT, Safar was approached by the university’s President to head a committee to explore expanding its usage to include all of the components of Interfolio’s Faculty Information System. “We were focused only on the Review, Promotion & Tenure component, but now we’re thinking about the four components,” explained Safar.

## Empowering Faculty With Flexible Technology

As an institution with publicly mandated policies and faculty handbooks, it was essential that technology—especially for career milestones involving review, promotion, and tenure—be flexible and customizable to reflect existing processes. “The applicants for promotion used to submit 10 thick folders that were distributed to the committees, and I have seen the senior members in our department dragging those folders on wheels to go to their meetings,” noted Safar. He also shared that it used to take up to 10 working days to transfer files between committees—and even longer to rearrange the content for the university President’s office—but Interfolio has made that process instantaneous.

Safar handled the implementation on his end, delivered training to his colleagues, and set up a support line, helping all parties involved quickly get on board with using Interfolio. “After using the system for a week or two, they loved it,” he said. When Interfolio was briefly shut down while the university handled an internal issue, Safar quickly heard complaints from staff. “They all raised their voices, ‘*We want the system back!*’ ” he noted, “and that’s why we want to expand to the different Interfolio components—hopefully in the near future.” Users at all levels are now seeing the benefits of Interfolio, highlighting the advantages of automating a process that was once literally weighing staff down with hefty paper folders.

“I want to retire to hire: Retire all the systems that we have, and start hiring Interfolio to help us using the full-fledged system. We have really enjoyed the experience so far.”

—Maytham Safar  
Professor, Kuwait University

## Increasing Transparency for Stakeholders

The transition to Interfolio has helped COEP standardize the review and promotion process across departments, with added transparency for everyone involved. Interfolio also helps keep candidates’ review materials secure and confidential, eliminating the need for physical copies that can be easily misplaced—resulting in a vast reduction in printing costs.

And thanks to the reporting capabilities offered by Interfolio, the Dean receives weekly reports detailing the promotion processes—letting them know the exact stage of each promotion in progress. “For the first time, people feel that someone is monitoring the promotion process,” said Safar. “You can see where they are, and the Dean can start pushing the departments to expedite the process of those files.”



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