Department of Justice, Law and Society

Procedures and Standards for Reappointment of Term Faculty

Updated: 10/30/2012

I. Procedures for reappointment of term faculty

1. The following procedures are effective immediately.

2. For purposes of this policy, the term “senior faculty” is defined as tenured faculty at the rank of Associate Professor or higher who are eligible to vote.

a. One-year reappointments

Term faculty will be recommended for one-year reappointments at the discretion of the chair in those instances when the needs of the department require the continued services of the term faculty member. A departmental meeting to consider a one-year term faculty reappointment will only be held if requested by three senior faculty members. If such a meeting is held, the department chair and senior faculty will follow the relevant procedures outlined in subsection “b” below. Such a meeting will only be warranted if a budget line is available for the position.

b. Multi-year reappointments

1. The senior faculty, except for those who are reviewing the file in another capacity or have a conflict of interest, will review files for action and vote on multi-year reappointments. A special meeting of faculty eligible to vote on such candidates will be held to discuss all applications for multi-year positions in a given year.

2. The department chair will designate a senior faculty member as convener to coordinate and preside over the senior faculty deliberations. The convener will schedule the meeting at a time that does not conflict with the teaching obligations of any eligible faculty member. The time and date of the meeting should be announced early enough that faculty can avoid other scheduling conflicts.

3. The department chair will report to the senior faculty on the projected needs of the department for term faculty over the relevant period, but will not participate in deliberations or voting.

4. Voting will be conducted by secret ballot at the end of the meeting. Only those faculty members who are present for the deliberations, either in person or through the use of technology (conference call, videoconferencing, or similar technologies), may vote.

5. The ballot will provide for a separate positive, negative, or abstaining vote on the following criteria:
   i. Meets reappointment criteria for teaching
   ii. Meets reappointment criteria for service

In the rare instance where the candidate’s contractual obligations include research, administration, or other obligations outside of teaching, additional criteria consistent with the language in the contract will be listed. The ballot will also provide for a vote
on the overall recommendation and, if positive, the length of the reappointment to be offered (from one to five years).
The convener will count the votes in the presence of the voting faculty. The faculty will then select a person to write a memo to the department chair reporting the vote, the recommendation of the faculty, and any other information deemed warranted. The recommendation memo will be circulated to the senior faculty for comment before it is sent forward. If the vote is not unanimous, the convener will choose a person to write a minority report. Final versions of these faculty memos will be due to the chair at least one week before the chair’s letter to the dean is due.

7. The department chair will provide a separate written recommendation based on his/her evaluation of the file.

II. Standards for reappointment of term faculty

a. General principles
Consistent with the university’s Faculty Manual, the Department of Justice, Law & Society relies on term faculty appointments primarily:

- “to retain a cadre of effective and committed teachers who can provide instructional continuity, particularly in multi-section courses
- to maintain flexibility in allocating its resources for faculty positions
- to bring in outstanding individuals who will enrich the learning experience through their professional qualifications and experiences from careers outside academia
- to provide additional time for scholarly pursuits of the tenure-line faculty
- to deal with exigent circumstances, such as replacing faculty on leave, filling vacancies that occur too late to conduct an appropriate search for a tenure-track faculty appointment, filling a vacancy resulting from an unsuccessful search for a tenure-track faculty member, or staffing an experimental program.”

Term faculty members have a workload that consists primarily of teaching. As outlined in the university’s Faculty Manual, term faculty members are typically expected to teach six courses per academic year. The standard workload allocation for term faculty members is 80% teaching and 20% service. Based on these principles, the department will ordinarily evaluate term faculty for reappointment based on their teaching and service.

In the rare instance where the candidate’s contractual obligations include research, administration, or other obligations outside of the standard workload allocation, these allocations can be negotiated. These alternative workload arrangements should be noted in the faculty member’s contract.

In those cases where the faculty member’s contract does not include research productivity as an explicit expectation, the department is not able to grant course relief to allow time for publishing and research. However, the department can acknowledge such efforts as part of the annual faculty review process.
b. Teaching

The university, the school, and the department all value effective and high quality instruction. Teaching is the cornerstone of term faculty appointments. Therefore, in order for term faculty to be reappointed, they must provide evidence of high-quality teaching and they must make a significant contribution to the teaching mission of the department.

For the purpose of all faculty actions at American University, “effective teaching” is defined by the Faculty Manual as that which:

“enables students to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and become active participants in the learning process…. Faculty may demonstrate effective teaching in a variety of ways, including course design, development of new curricular initiatives, up-to-date course content, student engagement and achievement outside the classroom (including independent studies), and adherence to evaluation procedures that accurately reflect student accomplishments. Teaching units or academic units may also view publication and presentation of teaching materials and methodologies as a contribution to teaching” (section 10a).

To the Manual’s list of ways to demonstrate a commitment to effective teaching, the department adds: the overall quality of syllabi and course materials; clear articulation of course goals; development of online and hybrid courses; the innovative use of classroom formats or technologies; effective use of regularly scheduled office hours; supervision of independent study, internships, theses and dissertations (though not as chair); initiatives to encourage student research and community service work; mentorship of students for prestigious awards; and other forms of engagement with students outside the classroom. The ability to be an effective teacher across a wide range of course types—including large classes, seminars (both graduate and undergraduate), online courses, and independent studies—will be considered a plus. So too, where applicable, will be the ability to teach a variety of courses at different levels.

Student Evaluations of Teaching are important, if imperfect and insufficient, indicators of teaching excellence. If evaluations indicate widespread dissatisfaction with a professor, there is likely to be a serious teaching problem. On the other hand, no professor is likely to be able to satisfy all students, and the professor with the highest teaching evaluations may not be the best teacher. The Department values intellectually rigorous courses, even if they do not necessarily achieve popularity as measured by standardized SETs.

In order to give the evaluation of their teaching the perspective that only a peer assessment can provide, term faculty are strongly encouraged to invite their department to conduct peer classroom observations, resulting in written evaluations for the faculty member’s file.

Term faculty members who are up for reappointment must provide a copy of the syllabi for all courses they have taught at American University during the current or most recent contractual period. These syllabi will be used as one of the sources for evaluating the quality of teaching. Candidates may include any other documentation of their teaching that they deem appropriate.
A core reason for the existence of term faculty positions is to provide academic units with flexibility in allocating their resources. Therefore, candidates for reappointment should demonstrate a reasonable level of flexibility in teaching assignments, and an ability and willingness to teach courses at different levels, depending upon the needs of the department. The department will not reappoint term faculty who are unwilling or unable to meet the teaching needs of the department.

### c. Service

Every member of the faculty at American University, including term faculty, is expected to demonstrate a sustained, high level of engagement in the university community, including service to the university at various levels, the profession, and the wider community. Active faculty involvement in the life of the department, school, and university is essential for effective faculty governance and is a responsibility of every member of the faculty. Ideally this service will span levels, occurring in the department, the school, the university, the discipline or the profession, and the broader community. Given that their primary role in the department is to provide expert teaching, term faculty may be called upon to provide particular forms of service related to the department’s teaching mission. This service might include providing mentoring on teaching to colleagues and graduate students, serving as a resource to the department on teaching-related issues, and doing peer evaluations of teaching.