Criteria for the Evaluation of Term Faculty on the Professorial Lecturer Track
Department of Performing Arts

The American University Faculty Manual calls for all departments or schools (a.k.a. “teaching units” and “academic units” respectively) to develop guidelines establishing the overall contributions expected of all faculty candidates for reappointment and promotion, in accordance with the “General Criteria for Evaluation of Faculty” outlined in section 10 of the Manual.

The purpose of this document is to establish promotion criteria for term faculty in the Department of Performing Arts on the Professorial Lecturer track, which includes the ranks of Instructor, Professorial Lecturer, Senior Professorial Lecturer, and Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer.

Unless the faculty member’s appointment letter specifies otherwise, term faculty on the Professorial Lecturer track in the College of Arts and Sciences will be evaluated solely on their teaching and service. In reappointment, promotion and merit reviews, the effort of term faculty on this track is customarily weighted as 80% teaching and 20% service, though adjustments to that weighting are possible with the approval of the relevant department chair and dean. In particular, term faculty with significant service responsibilities, such as program directors, may weight their service up to 40%.

General Principles

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, 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 College would add: 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 (graduate and undergraduate), online courses, and independent studies—will be considered a plus. So too, where applicable, will be the ability to connect students to the faculty member’s professional community.

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 College 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.

In fulfillment of their duties, all term faculty on the Professorial Lecturer track are expected to demonstrate “a meaningful level of teaching unit, academic unit, or university service,” which typically entails, as a minimum, a significant commitment to student advising and mentorship (in the classroom, in office hours, and online) and participation in events and functions at the department, college and university levels (Faculty Manual, section 10). Candidates for Senior Professorial Lecturer and Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer are subject to additional service expectations, as detailed below.

“As members of the learned profession responsible for educating the future citizenry,” all faculty members at American University are expected “to exhibit civility, collegiality, and respect for different points of view in the academic community” (Faculty Manual, section 10).

Rank Criteria

The following section details specific performance expectations for each of the four ranks in the Professorial Lecturer track. Please note that, although the Faculty Manual anticipates that Senior Professorial Lecturers and Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturers will hold multi-year contracts ranging from three to five years, the recommendation to confer a given rank and appointment to a multi-year contract are, strictly speaking, separate actions. As a general rule, the College only considers term faculty for a multi-year appointment when a) the faculty member has taught at AU on a full-time basis for three to five years, and b) the Dean’s and Provost’s offices deem long-term funding of the position to be secure.
Instructor

In the College of Arts and Sciences, the rank of Instructor is reserved for a) those term faculty members who have not yet been granted their terminal degree, in which case the rank is “a temporary one-semester or one-year appointment”; or for b) faculty in certain skill areas—such as writing, mathematics or foreign language instruction—where the terminal degree is not deemed necessary (section 13). Reappointments at the rank of Instructor are typically subject to annual review. Instructors will be evaluated primarily on their teaching and secondarily on their service to their department or college, in accordance with the general principles outlined above.

Candidates for reappointment in the rank of Instructor should be successful teachers who have built well-thought-out courses that foster student learning and achievement and that reflect the current state of their academic field(s). Their course materials will state clear objectives that are informed by the goals of their academic unit or program. Their professionalism will be displayed through their syllabi, assignments, evaluation of student work, advising or mentorship, and Student Evaluation of Teaching scores that are generally in line with those in their department and college. Candidates for reappointment as Instructor will also provide service to the department, college, and/or university, commensurate with the general expectations listed above.

Professorial Lecturer

The Faculty Manual states that “[t]erm faculty members are awarded the rank of Professorial Lecturer if they (1) have demonstrated successful teaching in the rank of Instructor for a period of three years, or (2) hold the terminal degree in the field, or (3) have professional experience and achievement equivalent to a terminal degree” (section 13). New hires may be appointed to this rank if they meet criteria (2) or (3). Candidates who were hired as Instructors and do not hold the terminal degree in their field may apply for promotion to Professorial Lecturer after a period of three years.

Candidates for promotion to (or reappointment in) the rank of Professorial Lecturer should be successful teachers who have built well-thought-out courses that foster student learning and achievement and that reflect the current state of their academic field(s). Their course materials will state clear objectives that are informed by the goals of their academic unit or program. Their professionalism will be displayed through their syllabi, assignments, evaluation of student work, advising or mentorship, and Student Evaluation of Teaching scores that are generally in line with those in their department and college. Candidates for Professorial Lecturer will also provide service to the department, college, and/or university, with the expectation that their service profile will both broaden and deepen over time.

Senior Professorial Lecturer

After five years of service, Professorial Lecturers are eligible for promotion to Senior Professorial Lecturer. The Faculty Manual describes the rank of Senior Professorial Lecturer as recognizing “the contributions of faculty members who have served in the rank of Professorial
Lecturer and have demonstrated superior performance as a teacher. An academic unit may also appoint to this rank those who have equivalent professional experience” (section 13). Appointments at the Senior Professorial Lecturer rank typically “range from three to five years, depending on the needs of the teaching unit.”

Candidates for Senior Professorial Lecturer should be expert teachers whose courses foster, in challenging and motivating ways, student learning and achievement. Their course materials will promote the goals of their academic unit or program and demonstrate currency in their academic field. Their professionalism and expertise will be displayed through their course and curriculum development, syllabi, assignments, evaluation of student work, advising or mentorship, and Student Evaluation of Teaching assessments. They will provide significant service and contribute to professional development, which might include leadership activities such as faculty mentoring, assessment work, and research in their field, in addition to significant service to their department, college, and/or university. Candidates for promotion to the rank of Senior Professorial Lecturer must demonstrate continued involvement in their professional field.

Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer

The Faculty Manual describes this rank as “a term appointment an academic unit awards to a senior professorial lecturer who has provided particularly meritorious performance to the university over a period of years or to a new faculty member whose previous career and experience are notably prestigious” (section 13).

Senior Professorial Lecturers who are candidates for Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer should demonstrate a consistent record of marked teaching excellence. Their professionalism and expertise will be displayed through their course and curriculum development, syllabi, assignments, evaluation of student work, advising or mentorship, and Student Evaluation of Teaching assessments. Their application portfolios will show that they have continually refined their teaching, adapted to new student populations, and attended to innovations in the field. These candidates will also have demonstrated strong leadership in their academic unit or program, have contributed to professional development initiatives in their department or program and in their field, and have engaged in notable service to their department, college, and/or university. Candidates for promotion to the rank of Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer must demonstrate continued involvement in the professional field.