

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
Department of History

DEPARTMENTAL CRITERIA TO BE APPLIED IN PERSONNEL ACTIONS  
INVOLVING REAPPOINTMENT, PROMOTION, AND TENURE.

Adopted by Council, 6 October 1976  
Revised by Council, October 1980  
Revised by Council, October 1987  
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General Guidelines

American University and the Department of History require effective teaching, creative scholarship, and service to the Department and University communities from a faculty member seeking reappointment, promotion and/or tenure. The Department follows the general standards, timetable, and procedures for reappointments, promotion, and tenure laid down in the *Faculty Manual* and supplemented by instructions from the Dean of the College, the Deputy Provost and/or the Committee on Faculty Actions. This document offers more specific guidance for faculty members in History applying for reappointment, promotion, or tenure, as well as for the Department's Rank & Tenure Committee (Perscom) and Chair.

The Department normally expects faculty to excel at both teaching and scholarship and to make meaningful contributions to service appropriate to rank. If someone is no more than proficient as a scholar, he or she must be truly superior as a teacher to receive promotion to Associate Professor or tenure. A professor who fails to make a significant contribution to scholarship during the pre-tenure years will not receive promotion to Associate Professor or tenure, whatever his or her teaching record. Similarly, an excellent scholar who fails to teach effectively will not receive promotion or tenure.

Perscom and the Chair recognize that newly-hired or recently-hired faculty may build toward a record of teaching and scholarly excellence. The candidate is encouraged to consult Perscom and the Chair on matters regarding the rate of progress and methods of developing as a scholar and teacher.

Promotion to the rank of Professor is primarily a matter of the faculty member's level of cumulative scholarly achievement and professional service, high-quality teaching, active engagement with students in and outside the classroom, and professional recognition. Length of time in rank or at AU is not a factor in promotion to Professor. Nor is the number of years taken to meet requirements for promotion.

Historical research often contributes to knowledge surrounding the issues of diversity and inclusion. These qualities are also valued in teaching and service. Faculty are encouraged to highlight the varied ways in which their work furthers diversity and inclusion.

### Scholarship

The Department embraces the definition of scholarship included in the American Historical Association's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, which endorses the "dissemination of historical knowledge via many different channels of communication: books, articles, classrooms, exhibits, films, historic sites, museums, legal memoranda, testimony, and many other ways."<sup>i</sup>

The Department recognizes that quantitative measures of scholarship and hierarchies of formats for publication are imperfect and that the historical profession values quality over sheer volume. Perscom and the Chair must therefore do a qualitative evaluation of a candidate's work based on direct study. The measurement of the impact of the faculty member's scholarship must come in part from outside the University. Automated citation indexes are not customarily used as indicators for the reception of historical scholarship, especially for junior scholars. Instead, impact is indicated by qualitative measures of the work's significance and influence such as publication in selective journals, peer review reports, published reviews, invitations to present work at conferences and academic institutions, and the assessments of highly-regarded professional historians, both those in the department and those from whom outside letters are solicited during the review process.

Nonetheless, there are certain guidelines for achievement within the discipline that deserve mention. For most historians, the premier format of creative scholarship in history is the book. Historians tend to work toward the completion of one large project at a time. It is expected that candidates for tenure and promotion will bring their ideas to the scholarly community en route in the form of conference papers and shorter publications, such as articles in refereed scholarly journals, as a way of obtaining feedback and establishing a presence in the field. The Department seeks to tenure individuals committed to ongoing scholarship. Junior faculty should consider the completion of a well-researched, book-length historical study to be their principal scholarly aim before tenure. The norm in the Department, before tenure is recommended, is publication of one book (a monograph or a synthetic work) with a well-respected publisher or, in rare cases, publication of a large number of articles in important, refereed, scholarly journals. The Department recognizes that changes in the academic publishing industry have made it increasingly difficult to publish a traditional bound monograph in some fields. As long as standards of quality, academic rigor, respected venue, and peer review are met, electronic publication of the monograph, or publication of its equivalent in scholarly journals, may serve in lieu of a printed book. A book or article will be considered to have been

published if the final manuscript, including all revisions, has been accepted by the publisher, with an editor's letter confirming acceptance, before the Department's Rank and Tenure Committee makes its recommendation on tenure. The candidate should bear in mind, however, that external reviewers will read the manuscript at an earlier stage, usually the previous May.

An original documenting, editing, and publication of a major primary source (e.g., The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted or The Densho Oral History Project) may also weigh heavily. Other important contributions include edited books that collect scholarly articles, editing scholarly journals or proceedings, book chapters, articles in non-refereed journals, invited articles, review essays, other types of publication, smaller public history projects, papers and invited lectures, but it would be hard to build a case for tenure on them alone.

All faculty are encouraged to seek external funding. The receipt of prestigious fellowships or grants enables further research, is a sign that external reviewers have found a faculty member's research worthy of support, and is a strategic goal of the university. However, the receipt of external funds is not a requirement in History.

The *Faculty Manual* requires evidence of "the likelihood of continued successful achievements."<sup>ii</sup> Evidence of an ongoing research agenda beyond the first monograph might include, but is not limited to, conference papers presented, invited lectures delivered, article manuscripts drafted, grant applications written, or a well-thought through abstract of the next major research project.

The publication record to be evaluated is not limited to work produced after joining the AU faculty. As the *Faculty Manual* notes, "The university shall base its assessment of a faculty member's achievements on the aggregate productivity and impact of the work since degree completion, including evidence that the faculty member is productive at AU."<sup>iii</sup>

Outside scholarly evaluations of the candidate's work will take place during review for tenure and/or promotion as determined by the *Faculty Manual*, the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Committee on Faculty Actions, these authorities also specifying the numbers of outside letters needed at each stage. After consultation with the candidate, the Chair of Perscom will solicit outside written scholarly evaluation of the candidate's scholarly work. The candidate will normally suggest the names of potential reviewers, as well as the names of individuals who should not be solicited as reviewers; however, the majority of external reviewers must be those selected by the Department. The candidate will have access to their letters once they are received (redacted to preserve confidentiality); and he or she will be able to comment on them and respond to them in the file prepared for personnel action.

To be promoted to Professor, faculty members must demonstrate a continuing record of outstanding scholarship. For historians, this typically includes publication with a respected publisher of a second deeply-researched, scholarly book that goes beyond the subject of the dissertation; demonstrates increasing intellectual maturity; and makes a

substantial contribution to the field. Alternatively, particularly for faculty in the field of public history, a candidate may have produced work that represents, in scope, significance, and scholarly rigor, an achievement comparable to a second monograph, such as several high-quality articles in refereed, scholarly journals important to the candidate's field; a major exhibit, film script, or other work of public history; or another set of publications, such as multiple edited works or other productions that involve substantial contributions by the faculty member. The faculty member should also present evidence of other activity appropriate to a senior scholar. This may include but is not limited to refereed articles, chapters, translation, papers presented, grants, contracts, consulting experience, or the like, or equivalents in the field of public history.

### Public History

The Department recognizes that public history work often blurs the traditional boundaries between research, teaching, and service. Such work is often collaborative, involving the efforts of multiple professionals. Moreover, the work of public historians engages members of the public itself—sometimes as audience, but often as active collaborators in the creation of history.

While the Department recognizes the publication of a peer-reviewed book as an important criterion for tenure and promotion, it equally values other forms of creative scholarship that make significant contributions to what the AHA describes as “the discovery, exchange, interpretation, and presentation of information about the past.”<sup>iv</sup> Such work might include the editing of documentary collections, conducting oral history projects, producing work on film and video, curating museum exhibitions, preparing major reports to government or historical agencies, winning grant awards, delivering extensive expert testimony, creating major websites, directing community-based public history projects, and other similar historical work. The sum of such work should represent the equivalent in scholarly achievements to the publication of a book.

Faculty wishing to have such public history work recognized for tenure or promotion should carefully document (through the submission of a portfolio) the scholarly process involved, taking care to demonstrate the nature and scope of the project, its historical significance, its impact on its audiences, and, importantly, the research and specific contributions made by the individual faculty member. As with traditional scholarship, the work's value is indicated by the degree to which professional peers value it. Faculty are encouraged to submit evidence of review and assessment from a variety of external sources. The Department should arrange for an external review of the faculty member's portfolio by a prominent public historian. Faculty seeking promotion should discuss in their file for action their future trajectory in public history.

For a fuller discussion of these issues, please see “Tenure, Promotion, and the Publicly Engaged Academic Historian,” a report adopted by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) Executive Board on April 8, the National Council on Public History (NCPH) Board of Directors on June 3, and the American Historical Association (AHA) Council on June 5, 2010. (See Appendix 1)

## Teaching Effectiveness

We recognize that it is impossible to define the techniques of "effective teaching" in a way that all teachers would endorse. We also understand that what might be effective for one teacher might prove either impossible or disastrous for another. Nonetheless, the end product of all effective teaching is that the students learn, that they achieve competence in the content of the material covered, and that they improve their critical faculties not only for further study in history, but also for work in other disciplines.

Evidence of teaching activities beyond scheduled courses will also be considered in assessing a faculty member's effectiveness. Such evidence may include advising at the undergraduate and graduate level, supervising independent studies and theses, initiatives to encourage student research, awards received by students mentored, student presentations at scholarly conferences, student work included in exhibitions, membership on dissertation committees, directing dissertations, and participating in other student learning activities. It may also include developing new courses, up-to-date course content, new curricular initiatives, online courses and teaching modalities, innovative use of classroom formats or technologies, publication and presentation of teaching materials and methodologies, community research and service components, internship supervision, and the planning and management of public history projects.

Good teaching encompasses a variety of skills and accomplishments. Teachers should be effective in lecture classes, seminars, and independent study courses. They should be sufficiently perceptive, flexible, and knowledgeable to be able to educate a range of students, from young undergraduates to advanced graduate students. They should have a thorough, up-to-date mastery of a field or fields in history, and they should be able and willing to teach a variety of courses within their range of competence. Ideally, they should also have sufficient knowledge of fields or disciplines outside their own specialties to be able to put into broad perspective developments in their own special fields. They should be able and industrious in commenting on students' work, and they should criticize constructively, not simply express dissatisfaction.

Through the distribution of syllabi and reading lists, as well as through oral comments, faculty members should provide students with clear guidance to the sources of information in a field and to the development of course themes. Contact with students outside the classroom can constitute a meaningful part of the educational process. The good and dedicated teacher should be approachable outside the classroom and, on matters of great importance, outside office hours as well. It is hoped that teachers will not only provide their students with new information in a field, but will stimulate increased enthusiasm and respect for a field or fields of study, whether history or other subjects. Faculty members may also be able to help students develop a link between their classroom studies and career objectives.

Evidence of good teaching will be sought in a variety of ways. Standardized student evaluations of teaching are important, if imperfect, indicators. If evaluations

indicate widespread dissatisfaction with a course and with the 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 achieve popularity as measured by student evaluations of teaching effectiveness.

Narrative comments by students on teaching evaluations from a course may be submitted as evidence of a professor's teaching effectiveness provided that all the narratives from that course are provided. Other sources include detailed comments by teaching fellows and/or faculty colleagues who have shared classrooms or served together on dissertation committees. Course syllabi, assignments, and examinations can serve as evidence of a well-organized, rigorous, and professional approach to teaching. Special lectures given to broad audiences of faculty, students, and others might provide evidence of skills inherent in good teaching.

The Department has adopted its version of the "Beyond SETs" Portfolio model developed by the Faculty Senate in 2019. The Portfolio is composed of a menu of items from which faculty may select the measures that they prefer within each category to include a teaching statement, self-assessment of pedagogical activities, peer assessment of teaching, and student assessment of teaching.

The College strongly encourages faculty members to arrange for class observation by a member of Perscom, who shall provide a written review for inclusion with the candidate's materials.

One of the most time-consuming aspects of building an effective teaching record is the development of new courses. The Department must work with junior faculty to ensure that they have the opportunity to teach varied courses within their area of competence, while not requiring so many distinct course preparations as to leave inadequate time for the conduct of significant scholarship.

The faculty member seeking promotion to Professor shall exhibit a continued commitment to excellent teaching in a variety of courses in the faculty member's area of expertise that also meet departmental needs. Mentoring and/or advising students at the undergraduate or graduate level remains important.

### Service

Service to the Department, the wider University community, and the profession is a valuable contribution and an intrinsic part of a faculty member's basic obligations. Service is essential for promotion, with an increasing obligation at each rank.

Too much time devoted to service by tenure-track assistant professors, however, such as chairing a search committee or leading major curriculum reform efforts, may hamper the completion of scholarly projects or the development of courses. Junior faculty should be aware that an outstanding service record will not eradicate deficiencies

in other areas, and the Department should assign service loads with due regard to the need to protect pre-tenure research time.

The Department values committee and organizational work in professional or scholarly associations and editing of scholarly journals. Being asked or elected to participate in such activities constitutes an expression of the scholarly regard in which one is held by one's peers. Members of the Department should be encouraged to participate in such activities.

The Department recognizes the extensive organizational and other efforts involved in historical work that engages with the public and values the dissemination and joint production of historical knowledge through collaboration with our federal and non-profit partners and through civic engagement. The Department also recognizes the importance of administrative duties involved in directing specialized academic programs and will credit such service toward tenure and promotion.

Tenured faculty seeking promotion to Professor are expected to have participated in a wider range of service activities at the College or University level and/or to have increased their level of responsibility or leadership within the Department (for example, by chairing a committee or serving as a program director). Mentoring junior faculty is also taken into account. Service to the profession is also important, and may include refereeing article or book manuscripts, organizing panels or conferences, and serving as a reviewer for grants or fellowships, on editorial boards or as editors, and as officers or committee members in professional organizations.

AU is “deeply committed to service to a wider community,” as the *Faculty Manual* states, although it notes that “service beyond the university cannot substitute for a service contribution to the university but may count toward faculty members’ fulfilling their workload obligation.”<sup>v</sup> Individual academic units are to establish guidelines for evaluating external service. The Department does not require, but highly values, voluntary service and engagement with the community outside the University.

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<sup>i</sup> *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 2011), 7.

<sup>ii</sup> “The university shall base its assessment of a faculty member’s achievements on the aggregate productivity and impact of the work since degree completion, including evidence that the faculty member is productive at AU. The work should relate directly to the criteria established by the teaching unit or academic unit. An additional required assessment addresses the likelihood of continued successful achievements.” (*Faculty Manual 2018*, pg. 37)

<sup>iii</sup> *Faculty Manual 2018*, pg. 37.

<sup>iv</sup> *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 2011), 7.

<sup>v</sup> *Faculty Manual 2018*, pg. 38.