

## Tenure and Promotion Guidelines Department of Physics, American University

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Concerning faculty actions, the American University Faculty Manual states:

Every faculty action should serve to enhance the quality of the University. Faculty members must demonstrate effective teaching, effectiveness in fulfilling primary responsibilities, significant scholarship, and a willingness to assume a fair share of service. There must also be evidence of the ability and commitment to continued advancement in all areas. As members of the learned profession responsible for educating the future citizenry, the university expects faculty members to exhibit civility, collegiality, and respect for different points of view in the academic community.

This document serves as guidelines for evaluating these criteria for Physics faculty actions concerning tenure, promotion to Associate Professor and/or promotion to Professor. The overall recommendation for tenure and/or promotion will give more weight to scholarship and teaching than to service for all actions. The relative merits of specific criteria are suggested below, but the final evaluation will reflect a holistic view of each category.

The following criteria are intended as evidence of faculty productivity and as tools to help identify the quality and impact of faculty work. When faculty members up for an evaluation complete their files for action, they should use these criteria (as well as information in the Faculty Manual and from the CAS Dean's office) to select the evidence to present.

### **Scholarship**

In the category of scholarship, the file for action in cases of tenure, promotion to Associate Professor and/or promotion to Professor is expected to provide evidence that the faculty member is a recognized expert in their field. It is further expected that the candidate will provide evidence of a directed research program and clear trajectory for future work. To quote the Faculty Manual again:

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.... An additional required assessment addresses the likelihood of continued successful achievements.

Generally, scholarship completed while at AU will be given more weight, but this balance can be adjusted for faculty bringing substantial credit towards tenure. In the case of promotion to Professor, the file for action should demonstrate that the candidate has sustained a record of scholarly achievement since the previous evaluation. The candidate should also present evidence that they have attained national recognition in their field. Significant indicants of this might include honors and awards from professional organizations, appointments to editorial boards or task forces, selection for organizing committees of prestigious conferences, positions in the governance of scholarly and professional organizations, or invitations to speak at prestigious conferences.

Candidates for tenure and promotion to associate professor must clearly articulate their research plans for the period after promotion. These plans may change, and in fact often do as new data, information, knowledge, skills, and applications emerge, and so the details of the plans are less important than the assurance they give the evaluators that the candidate intends to keep research and scholarship at the center of their professional life. Similar plans for continued productivity should also be found in the promotion files for associate to full professor.

As a general principle, we believe that peer review provides the strongest evidence for quality and impact of faculty work, whether by faculty, researchers, or other professionals within the discipline. As such, any evidence of meaningful peer review should be given weight in the evaluation process. In particular, external letters, which are required for tenure and promotion decisions, should strongly inform the assessment of the committee. Finally, submission of the file for action to the first-level reviewer is the last date for placement of scholarship material in the file, with updates allowed for reporting publication acceptance(s) of material already referenced in the file (as provided in the Committee on Faculty Action's "Instructions for Submitting Files for Action").

#### Primary criteria

- Refereed journal articles: We will attend to both their number and their quality. Assessment of quality can be based on many indicants, but with recognition that all of them will require contextual information for their interpretation. Some indicants assess the quality and impact of individual articles, like citations, expert testimony, reviews, and press coverage. Some indicants assess the journal of publication rather than the article in question; common ones for this purpose include journals' acceptance rates, their impact factors, and their prestige ratings (when those exist). When there are multiple authors, the role of the faculty member under review should be clarified in the file for action.
- Externally funded grants, contracts and awards: In many subdisciplines of Physics, external funding is required to advance research agendas, and in all subdisciplines external funding typically provides evidence of critical peer review. Therefore, it is necessary that all candidates in tenure and promotion actions provide evidence of applications to appropriate external funding opportunities. At the time of evaluation for tenure and/or promotion, candidates must demonstrate that their history of funding is sufficient to maintain or grow their research programs. Prestige of the funding source, strenuousness of the peer review, oversubscription rate of the funding opportunity, size of the award, and impact on the productivity and quality of faculty

scholarship will be considered in the evaluation of external funding. The faculty member should explain their contribution if there are multiple PIs. Scores and reviews for all external funding opportunities, whether successful or not, may be submitted at the applicant's discretion.

#### Secondary criteria

- Books and chapters in books: This form of scholarship is less common in Physics than in other fields. As for journal articles, assessment of quality can be based on many indicants. Citation counts (available in Scopus, Google Scholar and ISI Web of Science), when available, can provide evidence of impact in the field. We also recognize that being published by respected presses (e.g., Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press) or prestigious series (e.g., the International Series of Monographs on Physics) are indicants of quality. Reviews may also be valuable in assessing the quality of a book or chapter. We recognize that either authorship or editorship can be a valuable contribution to a book. Editorship and authorship of books that advance a field are viewed more favorably than textbooks or trade books that primarily summarize accomplishments in a field for a broader audience.
- Refereed conference proceedings: These are often reviews of a topic (with little new work) or preliminary results from a study. As such, proceedings are usually subjected to a less rigorous evaluation process than journal articles. However, refereed conference proceedings are still valued forms of peer review in Physics. The prestige of the conference will affect the evaluation of impact for the document. International conferences with a focused topic will be rated more highly than national or regional conferences or conferences with a broader reach.
- Selection as a consultant or expert by external organizations for research-related projects. The quality of the outside organization and the scope of the task will be evaluated.

#### Tertiary criteria

- Important indications of the respect afforded the faculty member by the field: These might include: appointments to grant review panels; selection as a reviewer of journal manuscripts or reviewer of records of candidates for tenure/promotion at other universities; invitations to speak at other universities; or requests to serve on PhD committees at other institutions. All candidates for tenure, promotion to Associate Professor and/or promotion to Professor are expected to show some evidence in this criterion.
- Non-refereed journal articles or conference proceedings
- On-line published research with evidence of impact, such as arXiv.org, research blogs, other preprint servers, etc.
- Refereed and non-refereed conference presentations, including published abstracts of these presentations
- Successful internal grants and awards
- Formal and informal connections to local research institutions and funding agencies
- Works in progress (e.g., manuscripts under review, studies being run)

## Teaching

Candidates for tenure, promotion to Associate Professor and/or promotion to Professor must provide evidence that they are effective teachers. In general, the faculty member will be expected to demonstrate efficacy in AU Core courses, as well as courses designed specifically for Physics majors and minors. Collaborative research with students is important to the Physics Department's mission, so the candidate should provide evidence of work with the undergraduate students. (Note: The Department of Physics currently has no graduate students.) Candidates are also expected to provide timely, fair, and objective assessment of student performance.

Candidates for tenure and/or promotion to Associate Professor must demonstrate that they have achieved excellence in teaching. Candidates for promotion to Professor must demonstrate a sustained record of excellence in teaching.

### Primary criteria

- Peer review of teaching: We expect the members of the Rank and Tenure Committee and the department chair to schedule a visit to the classroom of any faculty member who will be coming up for an action. The faculty member under review will provide course materials such as syllabi to the reviewers and will receive feedback at the time of review. These visits will be documented and a record will be included in the file for action.
- Research supervision: This involves supervision of honors capstones, independent study projects, and other student research activities. We consider both the quantity and quality of research supervision. Among the factors we consider are:
  - Number of research supervisees
  - Student feedback on the quality of the professor's supervision of them
  - Number and quality of publications and conference presentations with students
  - Funding for student research acquired
- Intentional and effective teaching: Candidates should demonstrate efforts to enhance student learning. This could include:
  - Demonstration of attention to both course and department learning outcomes. Evidence for this could include formal and informal measures of student learning, course material development, annotated syllabi, and research-based pedagogy in the classroom
  - Contribution to department assessment activities, in producing materials for review or reviewing materials, or both
  - Participation in professional development workshops and other activities that may lead to enhanced teaching strategies and student learning experiences
  - Peer observation of colleagues inside and outside the department

### Secondary criteria

- Course Evaluations: The course evaluation scores will be assessed in the context of each class, taking into account indicants such as the class size, the diversity of students being served, the inclusion of a laboratory component to the class, the number of times that the instructor has

taught the course, the instructor's inclusion of innovative pedagogy, etc. We encourage the course evaluations to be analyzed in context and using appropriate statistical measures. For subsequent promotion actions, the candidate will be expected to show a sustained record of teaching at this level. In their files, candidates should address scores that are below expectations; a discussion of course evaluation narratives in the context of the course may be useful in these cases. Using the current version of course evaluations, the following ratings receive special attention from higher levels in the review process, and so particular attention should be paid by the faculty member under review and the Rank and Tenure Committee:

- Ratings of the degree to which the instructor required high levels of performance
- Overall ratings of instructor
- Ratings of students' satisfaction with what they have learned in the course
- Overall ratings of course
- Contributions to efforts to support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the field, such as attending DEI training through HR, CTRL, etc; working to ensure access and equity when serving on committees and participating in activities (searches, curriculum, retention and advising, outreach); and working to ensure that the courses they teach provide curricula that involve inclusive pedagogy
- Teaching awards
- New course development
- Program development
- Teaching innovations
- Use of information technology in teaching
- Selection as a consultant or expert by external organizations for teaching-related projects
- Community-based teaching and learning, both formal and informal

### **Service**

Candidates for tenure or promotion must show evidence of service to the Department, the College and the University. Since this is the least important of the three evaluation categories, pre-tenured faculty should have the lowest service loads in the department. Accordingly, the service requirements for promotion to Professor will exceed those needed to achieve tenure or promotion to Associate Professor. The small size of the department requires that all Physics faculty contribute substantially to departmental committees and service.

Service activities that are expected of all candidates for tenure and/or promotion to Associate Professor or Professor include:

- Participation on Department committees
- Participation on College or University committees
- Recruitment and/or development at Departmental, College or University levels

Service activities that could be appropriate for all candidates for tenure and/or promotion to Associate Professor or Professor, but that are not required, include:

- Active involvement in professional societies
- Service to government and non-profit agencies and organizations on scientific matters

Service activities appropriate for faculty with tenure, a selection of which will be expected of candidates for promotion to Professor, include:

- Chair of department committees
- Director of program or chair of department
- Mentoring of junior faculty
- Leadership on College or University committees
- Leadership in outside professional organizations or professional societies

**Final Notes:**

- These criteria may also be used as the basis for reappointment and annual merit review scores by the Rank and Tenure Committee and the Chair.
- Gödel's Theorem proves that every axiomatic system is incomplete. In as much as these criteria form an axiomatic system, this theorem guarantees that exceptions to this evaluation system must exist.
- The Department will review these guidelines on a regular basis and make amendments when warranted.