

## **Merit Criteria for Consideration in Tenure and Promotion Decisions**

Rank and Tenure Committee  
Department of Psychology / CAS  
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Our objective is to find indications of performance worthy of tenure, promotion, or both. These indicants may take many forms. The absence of any particular sign of excellence may be unimportant, but the presence of worthy accomplishments, in whatever form they take, is crucial. Overall evaluation of faculty accomplishments and recommendation for tenure and promotion are based upon *Research and Scholarship* (very important), *Teaching* (very important), and *Service* (meaningful, but less important than the first two categories). The department values efforts to build diversity, equity, and inclusion in the university and in the profession.

Within each category, we use neither a detailed hierarchy of criteria nor a quantitative point system, because each measure available to us is subject to influences other than the ones we are trying to detect — variation in faculty excellence. We therefore adopt a somewhat holistic approach in considering the entire record brought forward by the faculty member. Nevertheless, we can at least roughly group our criteria according to whether they are given primary versus lesser consideration. These groupings are described below. In all cases of data that are countable, such as journal articles published and committees chaired, quality as well as quantity are important.

### **Research and Scholarship**

#### **Criteria for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor**

For promotion to Associate Professor, candidates should be widely recognized as outstanding and as having a substantial impact on the field according to the Primary Criteria detailed below and, to a lesser degree, according to Secondary and Other Criteria below. In reviewing files, the Rank and Tenure committee will base its assessment of a candidate's achievements on the aggregate productivity and impact of work since degree completion, with emphasis given to work completed while at American University. For faculty bringing substantial credit toward tenure, the balance can be adjusted accordingly. After preparation of a file, candidates may add information to their file at any stage during the internal review process.

Meritorious scholarly contributions in Psychology typically consist either of reviews of earlier research or primary reports of research results. Research reports in turn may be based on studies conducted in a range of settings (e.g., lab, clinic, community); with non-human animals or human participants; and using a variety of designs (experimental, correlational, etc.). We recognize that different approaches will be the best choices for different research questions. We expect promotion and tenure candidates to make the case

for the approaches they have taken and will evaluate the work taking these arguments into account, as well as guidance from experts in the field, such as those who submit outside letters concerning the file for action.

### ***Primary Criteria for Research and Scholarship***

Almost all research and scholarly contributions to Psychology appear in scholarly journals or in books (sometimes as entire books). Our objective is to evaluate scholarly work in ways that are thorough but not formulaic. We will consider the two primary sorts of publication in turn.

***Refereed Journal Articles.*** Most of our faculty's research contributions take the form of articles in refereed journals. In assessing a person's productivity, we attend to the *number* of articles and, more importantly, their *quality*. Assessment of quality can be based on many indicants, but with recognition that all of them require contextual information for their interpretation. Some indicants assess the journal of publication rather than the article in question; common ones for this purpose include rejection rates, impact factors, and prestige ratings. Less common but imaginably useful measures are assays of the eminence of the people on the journal's editorial board or the people whose articles appear in the journal. Individual articles can be assessed using citation counts. Expert outside evaluators of the faculty member's record are liable to comment on the quality both of the journals and of the faculty member's individual contributions, as well as on the faculty member's eminence in the field.

The modality in which the journal may be published, e.g., electronic or print, is inconsequential, because modality does not serve as a clear indicator of quality. We also may consider such measures of scholarly impact as a faculty member's "h-index" or a journal's eigenfactor (reflecting, among other characteristics, rates of citation). We know full well that all citation-based indicators need to be interpreted in light of knowledge of the size of the relevant literature. Research on little-studied topics cannot be cited as much as can research on more mainstream topics. For that reason, we cannot create any single set of criteria that will be appropriate for all of our faculty members.

***Books and Book Chapters.*** In general, books and book chapters receive somewhat less weight than refereed journal articles, in part because the thoroughness of editorial scrutiny is not so reliable as it is in academic journals. Nevertheless, books and book chapters often can be evaluated in a manner similar to journal articles. For example, citation counts for books and book chapters are available in Google Scholar and Scopus (though their use is subject to the same limitations as citation counts of journals and journal articles). Books may be part of a series with a prominent editor. Some publishers (e.g., Oxford University Press) strike us as universally respected. Books and chapters sometimes get editorial reviews either prior to acceptance or during development, indicating the same sort of quality control that journals exercise. All of these can be informative and useful. Editorship as well as authorship of a book is understood to be a potentially important contribution. Editorship and authorship of books that advance a field

are viewed more favorably than are textbooks or trade books that primarily summarize accomplishments in a field for a broader audience.

***External Funding and Grants.*** Candidates for tenure or promotion must have actively sought external funding, with additional credit given for grant applications that receive funding. In reporting sponsored research application activity, candidates may, at their discretion, include information concerning the scores and reviews their submissions received. Although all funding applications are considered important in the evaluation process, we particularly value applications for which the candidate is Principal Investigator. Should the candidate receive a high score indicating a positive peer review, but funding not be made available, this will be considered in the review.

Applications may be made to a wide range of funding sources (e.g., federal agencies, private foundations). Our evaluation of the receipt of an award as an indicator of scholarly accomplishment will be stronger insofar as the particular funding source conducts a rigorous review process. Finally, though seeking funding is required, substantial external funding may not be an applicable standard in all subfields and it is the candidate's responsibility to make that case.

### **Secondary Criteria for Research and Scholarship**

Secondary criteria for tenure and promotion supplement, but do not replace, primary criteria. Secondary criteria include indicators of the respect afforded the faculty member by the field, such as: honors and awards from professional organizations; appointment to Editorial Boards; selection as editor of a special issue of a journal; appointment to grant review panels or task forces; selection as reviewer of journal manuscripts or reviewer of records of candidates for tenure or promotion at other universities; positions in the governance of scholarly and professional organizations; invitations to speak at other universities or conferences; and invitations to contribute articles or chapters to books or journals. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of secondary criteria.

### **Other Criteria for Research and Scholarship**

Nonrefereed journal articles and articles in the popular press can provide information about a faculty member's program of scholarship. However, we recognize that there has been an increase in the number of professional-looking but not academic (sometimes referred to as "predatory") journals. Articles in such journals (or in other avenues in which there is little-to-no professional accountability or scrutiny) will not be weighted favorably. It is the responsibility of the candidate to make the case for the quality and academic legitimacy of those journals in which the candidate has published.

More generally, non-refereed journal articles are less valuable in tenure and promotion evaluations than are refereed articles. Although conference presentations are helpful indications of active involvement in the field, they will rarely count as much in decisions on tenure and promotion as do published papers that are full reports of research. Selection as a consultant (e.g., to an organization or on a grant application) is a sign of recognition but

will rarely receive much weight in evaluation. Research work in progress (e.g., manuscripts under review, studies being run) is understood to be a sign of activity but rarely will receive much weight in evaluation until it is completed.

### **Criteria for Promotion from Associate Professor to Professor**

For promotion to Professor, excellence in research and scholarship should be amplified noticeably; that is, it would be expected that indicators of productivity and impact on the field detailed above for Associate Professor are substantially strengthened by the time of promotion to Professor.

## **Teaching**

### **Criteria for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor**

High-quality teaching is an important factor in decisions regarding tenure and promotion. The missions of our Department and University emphasize the importance of direct faculty involvement with students both inside and outside the classroom. In evaluating faculty for tenure and for promotion to Associate Professor and to Professor, we value the entire portfolio of teaching-related activities and accomplishments.

#### ***Classroom Activities***

A faculty member's effectiveness as a teacher can be assessed in many ways. At the time of consideration for tenure, and for promotion to Associate Professor and to Professor, a faculty member's portfolio of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) scores is evaluated both in an absolute and relative context. We consider SET items concerning overall ratings of course and instructor. We also may consider ratings of how demanding the faculty member's courses are, as well as other SET items.

In interpreting SET scores, we take into consideration various course characteristics that may influence them independent of teaching quality (e.g., class size, required vs. elective class, lower division/higher division class, etc.).

Although we recognize that SET response rates are ultimately controlled by students, faculty members are expected to make substantial efforts (e.g., as described in the Appendix to the March 2019 Beyond SET's Task Force report) to maximize response rates.

SET scores are not in themselves sufficient for evaluating classroom teaching. Other modes of evaluation of teaching quality are important as well and might include:

1. Course content that reflects currency in the field (e.g., up-to-date course readings, incorporation of new theories or findings in class presentations).
2. Detailed syllabi with clearly defined goals, policies, and course requirements.

3. Student assignments and projects that foster independent and critical thinking, research skills and/or the use of non-traditional assignments.
4. Use of innovative technologies and pedagogical strategies.
5. Major revision of existing courses.
6. New course development.
7. Engaging students by meeting with them to discuss coursework, future plans, and topics related to the mission of our university.
8. Reports of classroom observations by other University faculty members such as a faculty mentor, CTRL fellow, a colleague from the faculty member's discipline, members of the Rank and Tenure committee, or the chair.
9. Written description of the faculty member's teaching philosophy, pedagogic strategies, and innovative approaches to enhance learning.
10. Consistent with the university's strategic plan, community-based teaching efforts will be viewed favorably.

No one of these is required, but candidates must arrange for inclusion in their teaching portfolios of evaluations beyond the SET scores themselves.

### ***Outside-of-Classroom Activities***

Classroom activities alone do not suffice for the teaching portion of the portfolio. Our Department places particular value on supervision of undergraduate and graduate student research. Research supervision involves oversight for dissertations, theses, honors capstones, independent study projects, and other research activities. We consider both the quantity and quality of research supervision. Among the factors we consider are the number of undergraduate and graduate research supervisees, whether the faculty member serves as chair or in another role on the thesis or dissertation committee, students' feedback on the quality of the professor's supervision, timeliness of students' completion of their degree program, and number and quality of publications and conference presentations with students.

Although many faculty conduct research in areas pertinent to our doctoral students in the Clinical Psychology and BCAN programs, some faculty work in the many subareas of psychology other than those two. For such faculty, effective supervision of doctoral student research may not be an important criterion in evaluating teaching, although these faculty still would be expected to supervise the research of undergraduate and master's students. Non-classroom activities of secondary importance include, but are not limited to, receiving awards, honors, or recognition and taking part in the development of educational programs.

All faculty are expected to provide timely, fair, and objective assessment of student performance, both in classroom activities and in non-classroom activities.

Finally, the trend in teaching effectiveness over time also is considered in tenure and promotion decisions.

### **Criteria for Promotion from Associate Professor to Professor**

For promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, we expect continued excellence in teaching. This would be manifest through the metrics of classroom teaching and non-classroom activities by which faculty members contribute to the intellectual development of students.

### **Service**

Service embraces a broad range of activities that may occur on many levels within and beyond the University. All academic units depend on faculty service. Indeed, the rights and privileges associated with faculty membership evoke a responsibility for service. Accordingly, a record of consistent and engaged service is expected for a favorable promotion and tenure decision. Such activities may include active and effective participation in (a) standing and *ad hoc* committees, (b) departmental, college, or university events and initiatives, (c) scholarly and professional associations, and/or (d) local, national, and international communities.

### **Criteria for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor**

Candidates for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor should engage effectively in departmental service. Although it is not required, candidates for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure often will have begun to establish a record of service to the profession outside of AU. For example, they may be active members of professional societies, and they may have begun to complete *ad hoc* editorial reviews for scholarly journals or granting agencies. Such involvement would be seen as a positive feature of the File for Action.

Because Assistant Professors should devote most of their time and attention to developing their programs of research and scholarship, as well as their teaching, it is not expected that a candidate for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor would have already served in leadership roles within the department (e.g., committee chair, program director, or department chair) or in the profession (e.g., as a journal Editor or as a board member for a professional organization). For the same reason, it is not expected that candidates will have served on College or University committees. Such service, though not required, is appreciated, and may fit within the candidate's schedule of commitments, particularly toward the end of the pre-tenure period.

### **Criteria for Promotion from Associate Professor to Professor**

Candidates for promotion to Professor are expected to have continued to serve in the manner expected of candidates for tenure (i.e., regular and effective participation on departmental committees). Additionally, candidates for promotion to Professor would be expected to shoulder a heavier service load than during their pre-tenure years. This enhanced contribution could take the form of one or more of the following: (a) leadership within the department, (b) service to the University beyond the departmental level, and/or (c) service to the profession.

Leadership within the department could be shown by serving effectively as department chair or as head of a program within the department, creating new initiatives within the department, mentoring junior faculty, or chairing departmental committees. Service at the University beyond the departmental level might include active and effective membership, or especially leadership, on College or University-wide committees. Service to the profession can take many forms, including but not limited to membership on editorial boards or grant or fellowship review panels, as well as leadership roles in professional organizations.

Thus, there is considerable flexibility in how a candidate for promotion to Professor meets the service criteria, but the unifying theme is that she or he should have gone beyond the routinely expected departmental committee membership in order to make a stronger mark on AU and/or on the field. The candidate is responsible for documenting how this service contribution has been made and for making the case that such service has been performed well.