

**Department of Political Science**  
**Tenure Guidelines**  
**Approved by department's tenured faculty—May 27, 2020**  
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This document articulates the Political Science Department's established standards and expectations for recommending tenure and promotion and the principles that the Department follows in helping assistant professors to achieve that goal. We hope this clarifies the process and provides useful guidance for assistant professors about how to demonstrate excellence and create records of scholarly achievement worthy of a positive Departmental recommendation. These standards and expectations reflect University and Dietrich School criteria as well as the norms of our discipline.

Decisions about tenure and promotion cannot be based solely on formulas or checklists; in assessing the originality, quality, and significance of a candidate's work, the Department relies on its own evaluations and on those of external reviewers.

### **University and Dietrich School Criteria**

Standards for promotion and tenure are described in broad terms by the University and by the Dietrich School. Tenured and tenure-stream faculty should familiarize themselves with the policies regarding appointments and tenure set forth at the University level, which can be found in Article II of the Faculty Handbook (with Chapter II describing the purposes and obligations of tenure, Chapter III describing general policies regarding appointment and tenure, and Chapter IV describing criteria for the different ranks in the tenure stream).<sup>1</sup> The relevant criteria for promotion to Associate Professor at the University level are as follows:

An associate professor should possess a doctorate or appropriate professional degree and have substantial experience in teaching and research or applicable professional experience. The person should show a capacity and will to maintain teaching effectiveness and the ability for continuing growth as a teacher, scholar, and member of his or her profession. [They] should also have progressed in attaining eminence in a scholarly or professional field. An associate professor must display consistently mature performance in course and curriculum planning, in guiding and counseling students and junior faculty members, and in participating in the activities of the University.

The Dietrich School criteria, while more detailed, are also formulated in broad terms to cover the heterogeneity in scholarship among the various departments of the School:<sup>2</sup>

Within the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, tenure is awarded for demonstrated excellence together with the promise of continued excellence in scholarship, in whatever form that scholarship takes. Teaching and research...the two principal functions of the University, are also the two principal forms of scholarship...Excellence in research should

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.provost.pitt.edu/faculty-handbook/ch2\\_appt\\_tenure](https://www.provost.pitt.edu/faculty-handbook/ch2_appt_tenure)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/governance/criteria-promotion-or-appointment-tenured-rank>

not excuse incompetence in teaching, and teaching that is not founded in scholarship can make no claim to excellence.

In judging excellence, the indispensable ingredient for promotion to tenured rank should be creative or intellectual vitality as reflected in the candidate's teaching, and in the candidate's contribution to the advancement of knowledge or in his or her artistic activity. Vitality is best revealed through the candidate's activities—classroom performance, research, writings, artistic creations. These should be assessed for the evidence they reveal of intellectual power and originality. Quantitative measures of productivity and popularity, however useful, are no substitutes for qualitative judgments. Evaluations of the candidate's record of achievement will be used primarily to judge future promise. Elements of this evaluation shall include the quality and originality of the candidate's contributions to the advancement of knowledge, the candidate's status with respect to the standards of excellence in the discipline, and performance as a teacher. Tenure is not a reward for past services, but a kind of contract, a lifetime of security in exchange for a lifetime of continued creative scholarship.

Special care should be taken to establish achievement expectations for tenure for candidates whose work is interdisciplinary, collaborative, multidisciplinary or translational in character, or whose intellectual contributions and innovation are registered in part through significant societal impact, and evaluation processes should take account of unusual aspects of those expectations. For some cases, departmental tenure evaluation committees may need to bring in additional expertise and/or calibrate expectations for external references to ensure that a candidate's full breadth of achievements is evaluated.

### **Departmental Criteria**

Most broadly, a recommendation for tenure and promotion recognizes demonstrated excellence and the promise of continued excellence. Consistent with the Dietrich School tenure guidelines, the following points deserve particular emphasis:

- The award of tenure requires *demonstrated commitment to and achievement in both teaching and research*, with evidence of “intellectual vitality” as the “indispensable ingredient” of both.
- In assessing excellence in research, the Department is principally concerned with the *significance, quality, and originality* of the candidate's “contributions to the advancement of knowledge.”
- Ultimately, the recommendation for tenure and promotion is a *judgment of the tenured faculty*. The guidelines below are indicative of what we expect in a tenurable record, though they are not requirements (or guarantees) of one. Importantly, the department's

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<sup>3</sup> Unless explicitly discussed in a candidate's third-year review, this provision does not normally apply to departmental tenure evaluations.

and the dean's judgment is also informed by the judgment of eminent scholars in the field, who we ask to assess the "candidate's status with respect to the standards of excellence in the discipline." While the quantity of publications, the quality and prestige of the outlets, and other metrics such as citations can be important indicators of scholarly significance, "quantitative measures...are no substitutes for qualitative judgments."

- Since tenure rewards both past performance and "future promise," a positive recommendation reflects the Department's expectation that a candidate will be *contributing to the excellence of our institution into the future*, through their publications and their intellectual leadership in the discipline, as well as through their teaching and service. Scholars whose trajectory seems unlikely to lead to eventual promotion to full professor should not be recommended for tenure.

## A. Research Excellence

As discussed above, the primary criterion is that the scholarly record reveals evidence of the significance, quality, and originality of contributions to the advancement of knowledge. More concretely, the Department recognizes two broad pathways to tenure, an "article" pathway and a "book" pathway. For both pathways, we expect to see contributions that have an impact and have been judged to be excellent by the discipline at large as well as by the candidate's subfield. We encourage faculty members to discuss which outlets are most appropriate with the Department Chair, their faculty mentors at Pitt, and mentors in the faculty member's larger research community.

1. **Article Pathway.** Candidates should produce something on the order of 6-8 peer-reviewed articles in a combination of top general and high quality sub-field journals. Expectations for the identity and mix of journals will vary by sub-field and research subject.
2. **Book Pathway.** Candidates should produce a peer-reviewed book from a high-quality scholarly press AND 2-3 peer-reviewed articles in quality general and sub-field journals that are distinct from the book. As with articles, expectations for the identity and mix of presses will vary by sub-field and research subject. Articles may be related topically, substantively or empirically to the book but should make distinct contributions (e.g., advance or develop new arguments or further theoretical or empirical analyses). Articles that primarily excerpt or duplicate material contained in the book will not count fully toward this total. Books must have final approval from a press's editorial board following revisions (must be "in press") by the date of the departmental vote on the tenure dossier.

Research notes, short articles, and original research papers published as chapters in edited books from high-quality scholarly presses may also count toward this total. For some scholars, significant grant activity may also be an appropriate part of the dossier. We encourage candidates to seek out advice on these options.

It is important to note that while many professional activities that contribute to a candidate's professional profile, including invited lectures, other grants, awards, fellowships, and the creation of databases strengthen a case, they are not required and cannot substitute for scholarly publications.

All candidates should also provide evidence of significant progress on a "second project" (or projects) beyond the doctoral dissertation. While we evaluate the published record of scholarship to assess a candidate's contributions to date (including work published prior to the candidate's appointment at the University of Pittsburgh), we also consider unpublished manuscripts and work in progress to the extent that they inform our assessments of future promise.

**Note on Co-Authorship:**

While co-authorship is both common and encouraged in our discipline, Department and external reviewers must evaluate an individual candidate's scholarly achievements "for evidence they reveal of intellectual power and originality." When at least some of an assistant professor's published work is sole-authored, the evidence for such originality is clear. Similarly, it is easier to discern candidates' independent contributions to work co-authored with peers and graduate students than with their dissertation advisors or other senior colleagues.

**B. Teaching Excellence**

The University expects candidates promoted to associate professor to have the "ability for continuing growth as a teacher" and to "display consistently mature performance in course and curriculum planning" and in "guiding and counseling students." As with research, the Dietrich School expects candidates to demonstrate "intellectual power and originality" in their teaching, noting that "teaching that is not founded in scholarship can make no claim to excellence." In evaluating teaching excellence, the Department set out the following expectations:

1. Candidates should have taught a range of courses that reflect their research interests and contribute to the larger mission of the Department. We encourage tenure-track faculty to prepare no more than five (5) different courses throughout their probationary period. Subfields are expected to support tenure-track faculty by ensuring that they teach courses that will best enable them to meet the teaching expectations for promotion and tenure while managing their research workloads. The specific mix of introductory, upper-level, capstone, and graduate courses will vary according to the programmatic needs of the Department. Candidates may request sample syllabi from colleagues or from the Department when preparing courses that have been taught previously. Tenure-track faculty are encouraged to repeat courses when possible, subject to departmental teaching needs.
2. We acknowledge that there are many successful teaching styles and approaches. At a minimum, we expect all candidates to be organized, accessible, fair, and engaged in their teaching. Candidates can document these qualities and demonstrate teaching excellence in various ways, including through innovative syllabi, lecture materials, assignments, and assessments; through creativity in course design; and, through positive peer and student assessments.
3. Candidates should demonstrate experience and capability in mentoring and advising students. This will take different forms at the undergraduate and graduate levels, but

might include serving on thesis, MA, or dissertation committees, acting as teaching or research mentors, leading co-curricular or extra-curricular projects or programs, etc.

### **C. Service**

The University expects that candidates recommended for tenure and promotion will display “consistently mature performance” when “participating in the activities of the University.” As the Department values equity, diversity, and inclusion and seeks to create an environment wherein all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—are valued and respected by others, we interpret this to include, minimally, professional discourse and behavior and a willingness to perform service work constructively and conscientiously.

In determining excellence in service, the Department looks for evidence that candidates are engaged members of their professional communities (department, university, discipline) and for a record or promise of contributing to the common good. We recognize that candidates’ engagement and contributions can take many forms.. Departmental service is assigned in recognition of the need for candidates to build a service record and of the importance of protecting them from onerous or unfair service obligations.

The department does not expect tenure-track faculty members to serve on DSAS or University committees. If tenure-track faculty members are nominated for DSAS or University committees, they are at liberty to decline those nominations. There might be instances in which DSAS, University, or professional service work (e.g., program chair, editorial roles) seems particularly relevant or interesting to a faculty member; in such cases we strongly urge colleagues to talk with their mentors and with the Department Chair before making a commitment. Being strategic about when to say “yes” and when to say “no” is an important part of professional development.

### **Departmental Responsibilities in the Tenure Process**

The Department has established the following guidelines to help ensure that all assistant professors receive the support they need to achieve a positive departmental recommendation on tenure and promotion. Candidates have a responsibility to ask for clarification or further guidance on any matters discussed in this document from the Department Chair and their faculty mentors.

1. We only hire candidates who we collectively believe have the potential to earn tenure (and, eventually, promotion to full professor). Faculty members should express reservations about candidates’ potential in this respect during the hiring process. By voting to extend an offer, the Department is expressing its shared expectation that a new hire will earn tenure and its shared commitment to providing all appropriate support and encouragement.
2. Each newly hired faculty member will be assigned a mentor by the Chair. This person will offer advice on departmental processes and expectations, including expectations for tenure, and suggestions for potential sources of support for research and teaching within and beyond the university. (See the Dietrich School statement on mentoring, <http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/mentoring>.)
  - a. Mentors should meet formally at least once per semester with assistant professors.
  - b. Mentors should, with the Chair, clearly and faithfully convey the results of annual departmental evaluations to assistant professors.

- c. Mentors will, ideally, come from the same subfield as mentees, though this is not required. (Mentors are not research advisors; it is not the job of mentors to help assistant professors with their research.)
    - d. Any assistant professor may request a change of mentor from the Chair without explanation.
    - e. Assistant professors are encouraged to find informal mentors in other departments, within and beyond Pitt.
3. Annual Review
  - a. Since tenure evaluations require the collective judgment of the tenured faculty, the tenured faculty will meet annually to generate feedback for all assistant professors on their progress toward tenure and promotion.
  - b. The tenured faculty's feedback will be conveyed to each assistant professor in the annual evaluation letter, as recommended in the Provost's guidelines for faculty evaluations (<https://www.provost.pitt.edu/annual-review-faculty>).
  - c. The Department Chair (ideally with faculty mentor present) will also meet annually with each assistant professor to discuss progress toward tenure.
4. Third-year Review
  - a. All candidates should review the Dietrich School's policies on the third-year review at <https://as.pitt.edu/faculty/governance/departmental-procedures-concerning-first-appointment-third-year-review-and>
  - b. Every member of the tenured faculty will carefully review the dossiers of all candidates for renewal in the third year. Faculty members should frankly express any doubts about a candidate's progress toward tenure (at the third-year review) so that their criticisms can be fully discussed and evaluated. A positive departmental vote on renewal indicates a collective judgment that a candidate has a reasonable likelihood of earning a positive recommendation for tenure and promotion. If the faculty considers a candidate's chances of earning a positive recommendation slim, it should not vote to renew the candidates' contract.
5. Assistant professors are encouraged and expected to play an active role in departmental governance and program building.
  - a. We value all faculty members' perspectives and input in steering the direction of the Department and strongly encourage assistant professors to be active participants in discussion and decision making in committees and faculty meetings.
  - b. We expect all faculty members (of all ranks) to treat one another with respect.
  - c. The tenured faculty judge promotion cases on the merits, and all tenured faculty members have a responsibility to uphold this norm in our discussions and deliberations and to hold others to it. Nonetheless, we use a secret ballot and canvass on job candidates within rank to ensure that all faculty members can vote and express their preferences with confidence.
  - d. The investment of time required to achieve excellence in research and teaching at the start of a career is such that assistant professors should be protected from unduly burdensome committee assignments. Any concerns about service burdens should be discussed with the faculty mentor and the Chair at the time the request is made. Chairs and mentors recognize that discussions about such concerns are

appropriate and routine, and assistant professors recognize that raising a concern does not guarantee relief from a particular service request.

- e. In no instance should diversity of committee membership be invoked to justify a disproportionate service expectation on the part of any faculty member of any rank.