

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN AND CLASSICAL LANGUAGES
GUIDELINES FOR MCL FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS ON
PERSONNEL MATTERS INVOLVING PROMOTION IN RANK AND THE
CONFERRAL OF TENURE

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

This document provides MCL faculty members who contemplate making application for promotion in academic rank or for the conferral of academic tenure with the information they require as to the standards by which their candidacies are to be judged. In addition it provides those MCL faculty members voting on such candidacies with fair and clear standards by which the candidates are to be evaluated. In approving these provisions, the MCL faculty are fully aware that such standards cannot be applied mechanically to promotion and tenure candidacies, and that they do not remove from the voting members the requirement of individual, conscientious judgment.

WHAT IS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE BEHIND THESE GUIDELINES?

We believe that teaching our students must be the central focus of our discipline and that professional investigative research in our discipline is an integral part of the interface between teacher and student. Accordingly, candidates for tenure and promotion are expected--through their research and scholarship--to have established and maintained fruitful communication with their professional peers by keeping abreast of their respective disciplines and contributing to the body of knowledge comprising their disciplines, to have advanced their professional expertise beyond the graduate-studies level, and to have satisfied Department, College, and University requirements for promotion and tenure.

Our Department requires that tenured members of our faculty demonstrate a high level of accomplishment in communicating and interacting with their students, with their peers in the profession here and in other institutions, and with their colleagues in other departments and colleges at the University of Houston. Owing to this requirement, we evaluate candidates for tenure and promotion in terms of the three categories of teaching, scholarship, and service, with strongest emphasis placed on teaching and scholarship.

GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR WITH CONFERRAL OF TENURE

Teaching. Candidates must have demonstrated superior teaching skills. Areas of important interest in this category include, but are not limited to:

- Clarity in the organization and presentation of course content.
- Success in bringing students to a level of attainment appropriate for the courses taught by the candidate.
- Fairness in dealings with students. This includes making oneself available for consultation and establishing clear and reasonable measures for gauging student progress.
- Initiative and creativity in the design or modification of courses in the curriculum.

Evaluation of the candidate's skills in the area of teaching will be influenced by such factors as classroom visits by selected tenured faculty, assessment of student evaluations, publications or oral presentations by the candidate on pedagogical themes, participation in extra-curricular activities augmenting and enriching the classroom experience of students, participation on honors and master of arts thesis committees and doctor of philosophy dissertation committees, and the nomination for or conferral of teaching awards on the candidate.

Scholarship. To merit the strongest consideration, the candidate is expected to have published a book-length work of sufficiently high quality and originality to serve as proof of the candidate's capacity for engaging intellectually challenging interaction with students and colleagues. Otherwise the candidate should have such work in galley, completed except for minor revisions by a reputable press that publishes respected academic monographs. The press should be one that is approved and well considered by the candidate's readers.

In addition, the candidate is expected to have had published or accepted for publication several articles that would demonstrate on-going research indicative of the candidate's successful transition from the post-graduate level of scholarship to that of the level expected of tenured faculty. Preference in this category will be given to articles published in or accepted by first-tier, refereed professional journals (in printed, on-line or other electronic medium).¹

In regard to the format of the scholarship in question, the voting faculty will take into account the fact that faculty in the various areas of language and

¹ Candidates for promotion are advised to secure letters from editors of electronic journals which explain whether they are refereed.

culture studies may communicate with one another in ways that are distinctive to a given sub-discipline. Thus scholarship in the areas of pedagogy and linguistics, in which economy and generality of exposition and an empirical approach to the subject are traditional hallmarks, is most likely to take the form of articles, rather than of book-length studies, whereas work in such areas as cultural history, literary analysis, and comparative literature lends itself to more extended and discursive forms of exposition. The members voting on promotion and tenure will ensure that scholarship in the form of articles will be of sufficient number and depth to be considered at least equivalent to the published research taking the form of high-quality research monographs or combinations of monographs and articles.

The candidate's scholarship will be evaluated by at least three and no more than six external evaluators, who will be selected by the Evaluation Committee, working in concert with the Chair. One external evaluator will be chosen from a list submitted by the candidate.

The Evaluation Committee, in making its recommendation on a tenure candidacy, will take into consideration the progress of the candidate's scholarship since the third-year continuance review.

Service. The recommendation on granting tenure is based mainly on the candidate's proven record in teaching and research. For that reason, MCL tries to relieve faculty in the probationary period of the burden of service obligations. What the voting faculty will look for in this category is a willingness on the part of the candidate to participate constructively, even if in a necessarily limited way, in the operation of the candidate's unit and of the Department as a whole. It may happen that junior faculty members find themselves saddled with duties that cannot be shifted to staff members and which are not compensated for by reduction in teaching loads. In such instances the members may take into consideration such additional service burdens as a contributing factor in their assessments of the progress made by the member in question, while at the same time being clear that one's contributions in the area of service can never be a major factor in promotion and the granting of tenure.

GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION FROM ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TO PROFESSOR

Teaching. In order to be considered for promotion to the rank of professor, a candidate must have demonstrated both a commitment to teaching and the attainment of high competence in the organization, preparation, and dissemination of information in a classroom setting. Indicators of the candidate's having attained the required level of competence in the area of teaching include:

- A demonstrated interest in the design and refinement of the curriculum;
- Written work and papers delivered to learned societies on pedagogical topics;
- Service as chair or member of M.A. and Ph.D. committees in our own and other departments at this or other institutions;
- The conferral of awards for meritorious teaching;
- Evidence, provided by unsolicited letters from students and colleagues, by student evaluations, and by faculty class visitations, of the applicant's ability to interact with students in such a way as to meet or exceed the goals of a course, as these are stated by the instructor and understood by the student.

Scholarship. In order to receive strong consideration from the voting members of the Department for promotion to the rank of professor, the applicant must have produced high-quality scholarship indicating a firm grasp of the discipline. This would necessarily involve successful completion of an original research project or projects showing the applicant to have moved into a mature phase of professional inquiry. The highest consideration is likely to be given to applicants at this level whose research has taken the form of an original book-length study of an important topic within the applicant's discipline. Should the traditions of that discipline or current trends in publishing militate against the book format, then the members voting on promotion will ensure that scholarship in the form of articles or web-based research projects will be of sufficient number and depth to be considered at least equivalent to the published research taking the form of high-quality research monographs or combinations of monographs and articles.

However such research projects are carried out, it is understood that the published writings of the applicant would have to be of sufficient quantity, quality, and topical comprehensiveness to bring the applicant's work to the attention of peers in the profession. Indicators of an applicant's having attained widespread professional respect include:

- Favorable assessment of published work by external evaluators in connection with the application for promotion;
- The placement of books and articles in respected, critically demanding presses and journals;
- Citations of the applicant's published writings in the discipline's critical literature;
- Favorable journal reviews of published work;
- Invitations to contribute to national and international colloquia and to compilations of articles;
- Appointment to editorial boards of professional journals;

- Invitations to review manuscripts for publication.
Receipt of significant research grants from respected funding sources (such as the NEH, NSF, Mellon Foundation, or other comparable national and international institutions).

Service. In order to be considered for promotion to the rank of professor, an applicant must have demonstrated a willingness to share the Department's obligations in the matter of university governance. This necessarily involves such activities as service on Department, College, and University committees, boards, and elective faculty bodies. It may also include service as chair or sub-chair of the Department, as program adviser for one of the Department's components, or program director within the Department.

In addition, applicants for this rank are encouraged, though not required, to demonstrate a willingness to advance their discipline through service on local, regional, national, or international learned or cultural associations connected to their discipline.

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