

History Department statement on tenure

(Approved by the department's tenured faculty, November 12, 2012; amended November 15, 2013; amended September 26, 2016.)

This document is a statement of the History Department's standards and expectations for recommending the awarding of tenure and the principles that the department will follow in helping assistant professors to achieve that goal.

1. Standards for tenure. Those standards are stated in the Kenneth P. Dietrich School's "Criteria for Promotion or Appointment to Tenured Rank."
(<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/governance/criteria-promotion-or-appointment-tenured-rank>)

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.... 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.

To reiterate, the tenure review requires the department to undertake a new and thorough evaluation to determine whether this is a scholar who will be contributing to the excellence of our institution ten, fifteen, and twenty years into the future, not only through their teaching and service, but through the influence of their publications and their intellectual leadership in the discipline. Scholars whose trajectory seems unlikely to lead to eventual promotion to full professor should not be recommended for tenure.

In the area of research, the department's long-standing requirement for the awarding of tenure has been the final acceptance for publication of a book-length historical monograph, or in rare cases its equivalent in refereed essays, book chapters, or other work. That standard has two corollaries: first, the book must show clear evidence of scholarly excellence and originality and of being a truly significant contribution to its field of inquiry. That judgment will be made by the external referees contacted by the department as part of the candidate's tenure review, by the tenured members of the department, and ultimately by the Dean of the Dietrich School.

Second, while the book is a necessary condition for the awarding of tenure, it is not a sufficient condition. In order to meet the requirements set by the Dietrich School, candidates must show evidence of continued scholarly activity beyond the book. That activity can take various forms, including for example successful external fellowship and grant applications, refereed journal essays or book chapters that do not reproduce material included in the book, participation in collaborative projects with promising future pay-offs, and so on. Whatever forms it takes, candidates' scholarly work must demonstrate the same qualities of excellence, originality, and vitality required of the book.

A note on timing: When the department votes on a tenure dossier, no later than the first week in October of the candidate's sixth year, it does so on the basis of the most advanced version then available of the candidate's publications in progress. Thus, a book manuscript that is approved by a press's editorial board and placed under final contract by that date can be understood to meet the minimum standard for completion, above. However, the judgment of outside experts in the candidate's subfield is critical to the department's evaluation of the excellence, significance, and impact of the candidate's research trajectory, and that judgment will be rendered on the basis of a dossier that will have been sent out at the start of June at the latest.

In the area of teaching, candidates for tenure must demonstrate effectiveness in working with undergraduates, and readiness to advise graduate students and mentor them toward successful professional careers. Teaching excellence is demonstrated through courses that are well-designed and well-executed, through student evaluations, and through peer evaluations by departmental colleagues.

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that OMET evaluations are conducted for each course. OMET survey results for each course taught should be downloaded and self-archived every semester. Candidates are also responsible for ensuring that at least one peer evaluation of their teaching is conducted every year. The colleague conducting the evaluation should receive in advance a syllabus and sample assignments. After the in-class observation, they should share their thoughts in person and then write them up (routinely, in about three paragraphs), giving one copy to the candidate and one copy to the department chair for the candidate's personnel file.

2. Departmental obligations

When it hires a tenure-stream assistant professor, the department does so on the basis of a collective judgment that the new hire has the potential to become a tenured faculty member (and, eventually, a full professor). The department is fully committed to working with assistant professors to help them realize that potential. That commitment carries with it the following obligations.

(a) Strong tenure cases begin with strong hires. When conducting job searches, faculty members will review carefully and thoroughly the dossiers of every finalist for the position. In cases in which they have doubts about individual candidates' ability to achieve

at the level required for tenure within the six-year time frame, or in which they do not feel enthusiastic about the field of finalists, faculty members must express those doubts in the department meeting so that their criticisms can be fully discussed and evaluated. In cases in which a majority or a significant minority of the faculty has such doubts, the possibility of extending the search should be explicitly considered.

(b) For each incoming assistant professor, the department chair will appoint a mentor, who can offer input 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>.)

(c) The department chair will meet at least once per year with each assistant professor, or more often if circumstances warrant it. Department chairs must be fair and candid in discussing candidates' progress toward tenure.

(d) At the time of the third-year review

(<https://as.pitt.edu/faculty/governance/departmental-procedures-concerning-first-appointment-third-year-review-and>), and again when candidates are reviewed for promotion and tenure, faculty members will read the candidate's dossier, including his/her published work, carefully and thoroughly. When faculty members have doubts about the candidate's progress toward tenure (at the third-year review) or the candidate's fitness for tenure (at the tenure review), they must express those doubts publicly in the department meeting so that their criticisms can be fully discussed and evaluated. When faculty members vote on contract renewal or for promotion and tenure, they will only vote in favor when they have full confidence that the candidate will eventually meet the requirements for tenure (in the case of contract renewal) or has fully met them (in the case of promotion and tenure).

(e) We trust that everyone we hire will eventually become a full partner in collective governance and program building. But we also recognize that preparation for excellent teaching requires significant time investment at the start of a career, and that establishing a trajectory of scholarly publication does likewise. It is fully appropriate for TS faculty to make publication, teaching, and the development of an ongoing research agenda their three top priorities before tenure.

Appendix: Timeframe for book publication

Given that a historical monograph of recognized excellence and significant impact in its field will in almost every case be a crucial component of a successful tenure dossier, both candidates and mentors need to be well aware of how long each of the stages of book publication is likely to take. The following represents our best estimate of how long each of the stages of publication has taken in recent years for historians (junior or not) dealing with university presses, in cases where the basic evaluation at every step has been a positive "green light."

Beginning with submission to an interested acquisitions editor of a completed ms

Internal review by press and decision to send out for review: 1-2 months

External readers' reports: 4-6 months

Author makes revisions in response to reports: 6-18 months

Second review by outside readers: 2-6 months

Author finalizes ms for submission for copyediting: 2-6 months

Copyediting by press: 2-4 months

Author reviews copyedited ms: 1-3 months

Design and typesetting: 2-4 months

Author reviews page proofs, creates index: 1-2 months

Press publishes book: 2-4 months

Thus, even assuming positive responses throughout, publication will likely occur no sooner than 24 months after the initial submission of a completed manuscript to an interested press; it would not be unusual for the process to take instead twice that long.