

Department of Sociology

University of Houston

TENURE AND PROMOTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA POLICY

Departmental guidelines and policies are subject to policies promulgated at the college and university levels. In the case of promotion and tenure, guidelines provided by the Office of the Provost form the basis of all promotion and tenure decisions. While a college or department may choose to implement more rigorous standards than those detailed in the university-level promotion and tenure guidelines, a college or department may not implement policies that result implicitly or explicitly in the application of less rigorous standards than detailed in the university-level promotion and tenure guidelines. It is the obligation of the chair of the department to make all new tenured or tenure-track faculty members aware in writing of not only the university-level promotion and tenure guidelines (<http://www.uh.edu/provost/faculty-resources/fac-guidelines-docs-forms/prom-ten/>) but also any college or departmental level policies or procedures that may impact their tenure and/or promotion.

These guidelines for professional evaluation of tenured and tenure-track members of the University of Houston's Department of Sociology are prepared as a general document without reference to particular individuals or configurations of accomplishment. They do not prescribe a uniform roster of accomplishments that must be achieved by all candidates for tenure or promotion. Rather, they suggest ways of evaluating accomplishments in research, teaching, and service by allowing flexibility in assigning relative weights to these three activities.

The Department of Sociology, University of Houston, abides by the procedures specified in our by-laws and policies of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and the University in reaching recommendations in tenure and promotion cases. This document specifies the procedures employed at the departmental level in all cases where faculty members are under review for tenure and/or promotion to the ranks of Associate and Full professor. In addition, this statement specifies general criteria, the satisfaction of which constitutes the minimum requisite for tenure and/or promotion. Of necessity, these criteria must be somewhat flexible and sufficiently general to accommodate differences in specialty areas and methodology that affect the nature and quantity of scholarly productivity.

I. TENURE AND PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Under the university procedures, tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor occur together as one, inseparable process, except in cases where one is initially hired as an untenured Associate or Full professor. Also under university procedures, all Assistant Professors must be reviewed for tenure and promotion no later than during the Fall of their 6th year on the tenure track. Assistant Professors who arrive at the University of Houston with tenure track experience elsewhere will negotiate the remaining number of years before mandatory review at the time they are hired. Assistant Professors may also negotiate with the departmental chairperson and college dean time off the tenure

track as part of a leave of absence that occurs during the first five years on the tenure track. The six year designation is the maximum time limit; occasionally, on the basis of an exceptional record of professional accomplishment, an Assistant Professor may be reviewed for the tenure and promotion before that time, if the candidate so desires after consultation with the departmental chairperson. In such a case, the candidate has the right to stop the process at any point before her/his materials are forwarded to the college without prejudicing the future, mandatory (6th year)review. Faculty who begin employment as untenured Associate or Full Professors, in accordance with university policy, will be reviewed for tenure in the Fall of their third year of service. They should negotiate the specific criteria upon which tenure will be awarded at the time they are hired. In the remainder of the section, the procedures and criteria detailed pertain to the typical case of Assistant Professors, hereafter referred to as the candidate.

Ia. Procedures

The Personnel Committee of the department is comprised of tenured faculty . This body conducts the annual merit review process within the department in advisement to the chair. During this process, faculty members will receive feedback on their progress towards promotion and tenure. During the third year of an Assistant Professor's tenure clock, a more formal Third Year Review will be held. At this time the candidate will compile materials as described in the Department's Guidelines for Third Year Review. The Personnel Committee will meet to review the candidate's materials and provide detailed feedback in their letter to the chairperson which then be shared with the candidate.. This Third Year Review letter will be part of the candidate's tenure materials.

In the case of tenure, the Personnel Committee reviews the candidate's materials (the nature of which is specified below). At the close of their discussion, a formal vote is taken as to whether or not the candidate should be tenured and promoted. If the vote is unanimous, the committee drafts one letter to the chairperson supporting its position. If the vote is split, each side drafts such a letter. The chairperson then informs the candidate, in writing, of the outcomes of both votes, the major reasons for any negative votes and whether or not the chairperson will be recommending to the college that the candidate be promoted and tenured.

The candidate may request, and will automatically receive a hearing by the Personnel Committee, if the candidate wishes to appeal the outcome of the departmental process. To receive such a hearing, the candidate must request it, in writing, within one week of receipt of the chairperson's letter. If such a hearing is held, a re-vote will be conducted. At the close of the process, the chair will compose the formal letter of assessment including the chair's recommended action, to be submitted to the college along with the rest of the candidate's materials, including the letter (s) from the Personnel Committee. The chairperson's letter will include only the final vote counts of the Personnel Committee.

I.b. Materials

Late in the spring of the year preceding the review process, the candidate will submit to the departmental chairperson four to eight names of sociologists outside the University of Houston who share the candidate's specialty and who are "arms length" in their relationship to the candidate, as

defined by the college. The candidate may also submit names of up to four people outside the University of Houston whom he/she does not want to participate in the review. The chairperson is under no obligation to use the names recommended, but will not contact those the candidate does not want involved. The chairperson will also solicit suggested names from other members of the department. During the summer, the chairperson will locate between four and six arms length, outside scholars who agree to serve in a review capacity. The candidate will select several papers/book chapters that best represent her/his work and, together with a curriculum vitae, comprise the materials upon which the outside reviewers will evaluate the candidate's work. All letters from outside reviewers will become part of the file used within the department to evaluate the candidate and sent forward to the college.

In accordance with the University guidelines (usually in September of the year in which the candidate is reviewed), the candidate will put together a file comprised of at least the following (the candidate may supplement this in whatever way she/he wishes):

1. An up-to-date curriculum vitae.
2. A personal statement summarizing her/his professional accomplishments to date and discussing the direction of her/his efforts in the next few years.
3. Copies of all publications, grant proposals, works under outside review, reports to funding agencies, research monographs.
4. A list of departmental, college and university service, and of community service (professional service should appear on the C.V.).
5. A list of all courses taught at UH, graduate students supervised (thesis and internship), and thesis and internship committee service.
6. Teaching evaluations from at least one section of each course taught, and a sample of course syllabi.

In addition, the candidate's Third Year Review letter will be made available to the Personnel Committee. This file of materials constitutes the basis of review by the Personnel Committee. This file of materials constitutes the basis of review by both the Personnel Committee which consists of all tenured members of the faculty, and will be forwarded to the college for its review process. No other material (e.g., annual faculty assessments) will be considered in the process at the departmental level.

I.c. The Criteria

Candidates are assessed in three areas: research, teaching, and service. They are expected to demonstrate professional competence and commitment in all three areas, although service is a less important component than research and teaching.

A candidate's research is evaluated in terms of both quality and quantity of the written products. It is undesirable to specify a minimum number or specific types of publications required for tenure and promotion. Different candidates will have different mixes of refereed journal articles, books, grants, book chapters, research reports, and monographs, etc. As a minimum, the department expects that candidates will have published significant works from their dissertations and then have moved on to one or more new projects that have begun to generate publishable work. They should have demonstrated

scholarly independence by having at least some sole-authored work and/or several pieces of which they were clearly senior author. In addition to outside reviewer and faculty assessments of the merit of the candidate's scholarship, the quality of published work is partially indicated by where it is published. Therefore, candidates should have at least some of their work published by one or more of the following: 1) the premier general sociological journals (e.g. American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Social Problems); 2) the premier specialty journal in one's specialty field(s) (e.g., ASA specialty journals, Work and Occupations, Criminology, Demography, Symbolic Interaction, Journal of Marriage and the Family, International Migration Review, etc.); 3) a university or other prestigious press (for books and book chapters). Publication of textbooks for student use, unrefereed journal articles, and the editing of books are not of major importance in assessing a candidate's research productivity for purposes of tenure and promotion, although they will not count against a candidate. In addition to publication, the research component is assessed by looking at professional meeting presentations and by grants. Participation in the American Sociological Association meetings and the national meetings of one's specialty area are far more highly regarded than in regional association meetings. Research grants and contracts are not necessary for tenure, but are highly regarded if present. However, it is the scholarly and/or policy outcome of the research, not the grant or contract that expedites it, that is most important.

The department expects candidates to be committed and competent teachers. Student evaluations should be at least average for most courses taught. Candidates should have served on at least a couple of graduate student thesis or internship committees. In the absence of indications of outstanding teaching (e.g., a teaching excellence award or other concrete indicator of unusual merit), the minimum research expectation will be somewhat higher than where teaching excellence can be documented.

Candidates are expected to have completely participated in some on-campus service by serving conscientiously on a few committees in the department, college and/or university. In addition, they should have provided some service either to the community or the profession.

In assessing candidates for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, the department is using the candidate's performance during the first six years of their professional careers to predict their future professional competence and commitment for the rest of their careers. Given the variability within approaches to conducting sociological research, and the different outlets most appropriate for each methodology or specialty area, it is undesirable to specify an exact formula of expectations for tenure. This statement of criteria is therefore meant to be informative to candidates and the tenured faculty without being too rigid in its implementation. The tenured faculty of the department will weigh the overall merits of each specific candidate.

II. PROMOTION TO FULL PROFESSOR

There is no required minimum time between promotion to Associate and that to Full Professor. Promotion to Full Professor is not guaranteed at any point in one's career.

II.a. Procedures

The process of promotion to Full Professor begins when, no later than the end of the Spring Semester of the year before the review process is to take place, an Associate Professor makes known to the chairperson that he/she wishes to be considered for promotion during the following Fall. In accordance with college policy, candidates for promotion to Full Professor are assessed by only one departmental body: all Full Professors (except if the departmental chairperson is a Full Professor). This body meets with the departmental chairperson to review the candidate's materials in accordance with University guidelines (usually in October or early November). At the close of their discussion a formal vote is taken. If the vote is unanimous, the committee drafts one letter to the chairperson supporting its position. If the vote is split, each side drafts such a letter. The departmental chairperson communicates to the candidate, in writing, the outcome of that vote, the major reasons for any negative votes, and whether or not the chairperson will be recommending to the college that the candidate be promoted. The candidate may request, and will automatically receive a hearing by that body if the candidate wishes to appeal the outcome reported by the chairperson. To receive such a hearing, the candidate must request it, in writing, within one week of receipt of the chairperson's letter. If such a hearing is held, a re-vote will be conducted. At the close of this process, the chairperson will compose the formal letter of assessment including the chair's recommended action, to be submitted to the college along with the candidate's materials, including the letter(s) from the Committee of Full Professors. The chairperson's letter will include only the final vote count of the Full Professors. At any point during the departmental process, a candidate may decide to withdraw, in writing, and the process will immediately cease with no materials or recommendation forwarded to the college.

II.b. Materials

The materials relevant to promotion to Full Professor are the same as those enumerated in Section I.b. pertaining to tenure and promotion to the associate rank. The only exceptions are that the materials in this case pertain to the years since promotion to Associate Professor and, in some cases (e.g., teaching evaluations, campus service) only to the last few years. The procedure for obtaining outside reviewers is also the same as specified in Section Ib.

II.c. Criteria

The rank of Full Professor designates that one has achieved substantial national scholarly and professional recognition in at least one specific field of sociological expertise; that one is currently a nationally-recognized and respected expert. This requirement is in accordance with university policy. Teaching, campus and community service are of minimal importance in assessing a candidate. Professional service, however, is more important for this promotion than for the promotion to Associate, inasmuch as it is one type of indicator of national visibility. The following is a list of the various ways by which national recognition is both earned and indicated. No one is expected to have achieved in all of these realms, but candidates for promotion to Full Professor should have achieved in several since the time they were tenured and promoted to the Associate rank.

1. One or more research monographs published by a university or other well respected press. Positive book reviews are one indicator of their quality.

2. Major grant and/or contract success, as indicated by a high dollar amount or by a succession of smaller grants/contracts over time (this indicator pertains to monies generated by sources external to UH).
3. Several articles in the major general or specialty journals enumerated in Section Ic., as well as in lesser prestige but refereed journals, that focus on one or a small number of topics that build to a substantial reputation within one or a few substantive, methodological and/or theoretical area(s). Furthermore, they should have demonstrated scholarly independence by having at least some sole-authored work and/or several pieces of which they were clearly senior author.
4. A substantial number of citations in the Citation Index and/or having one's published work cited and especially discussed in textbooks (in both cases concerning work published primarily since promotion to Associate Professor).
5. The reprinting of published work in publications edited by others outside this department.
6. Several invited papers for special issues of journals, edited books, special conferences, and/or special sessions at general meetings, indicating that those who organize such meetings know and respect one's work.
7. Publication of several of several books reviews and/or review essays concerning work in one's specialty area(s) in the discipline's major review journal (Contemporary Sociology) and/or in other well respected journals that publish reviews (e.g. Social Forces, American Journal of Sociology, and many specialty journals such as Symbolic Interaction, Gender & Society, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Urban Affairs Review, etc.).
8. Appointed or elected positions in national professional organizations, including one's specialty organization(s).
9. Serving as editor or on the editorial board of major professional journals—general or specialty area.
10. Serving in a reviewing or consulting capacity for national governmental agencies/bodies and/or major foundations, including being asked to address policy-making organizations of the government about one's expertise.

EPILOGUE

This statement has been adopted by majority vote of the Sociology Department, University of Houston. Relevant sections will be sent to each outside reviewer and will be forwarded to the college as part of each candidate's materials.

Adopted by majority vote of the department faculty, September 16, 2015