

FAQ Tenure and Promotion Criteria

❖ Are there important changes in statements about criteria that affect all tenure-line faculty ranks?

There are important clarifications. This year's FH is the first one to include specific statements about the relationship between FH criteria and departmental criteria, and this language affects all promotion and tenure. Both FH and departmental criteria "shall be considered in all tenure decisions." The addition of this language is a codification of existing practice.

FH 3.7.1-2 now reads:

3.7.1 The purposes intended to be served by providing the protection of academic tenure to faculty members are to secure their academic freedom and to help the institution attract and retain faculty members of high quality. While academic tenure may be withheld on any grounds other than those specifically stated to be impermissible in section 3.7.6, its conferral requires the assessment that the candidate has met the criteria for the rank of associate professor as specified in 3.8.6.2. Promotion or appointment to the rank of professor confers permanent tenure (3.8.6.6 and 3.8.7.3) and requires the assessment that the candidate has met the criteria for the rank of professor (3.8.7.2.).

3.7.2 The Faculty Handbook criteria for the conferral of tenure shall be the basis for each academic department's criteria for conferral of tenure, and both Faculty Handbook and departmental criteria shall be considered in all tenure decisions. Departmental criteria may be more rigorous than Faculty Handbook criteria.

The conferral of tenure requires:

- (a) an assessment of the faculty member's demonstrated professional competence;
- (b) potential for future contributions;
- (c) commitment to effective teaching, research, and public service; and
- (d) the needs and resources of the institution."

In summary, an Assistant Professor candidate must meet the criteria for Associate Professor, as well as the criteria for academic tenure in order to be granted tenure. Associate Professors without tenure who wish to request promotion to professor and tenure at the same time, must meet the criteria for professor as well as tenure.

❖ Have the FH criteria for promotion and tenure changed?

Yes, in subtle but significant ways. In the criteria for associate professor (3.8.6.2), the phrase "unless there are exceptional circumstances" now modifies all items under "a)" in these sections. The effect of this change—in conjunction with changes to other sections, which are discussed separately—is to allow assistant professors to come up for promotion and tenure one year earlier than has previously been the rule at Appalachian. Assistant professors will need to assess if they have met the criteria for promotion and tenure in the earlier (fifth) year. They will not be held to a higher standard of performance than candidates who apply during their sixth year, but they will need to meet the same criteria as faculty who come up in their mandatory sixth year.

In regard to associate professors who are appointed without tenure, FH 3.8.6.9 states: “Associate Professors, not appointed with tenure, shall be reviewed for tenure no later than the fourth year of appointment except when the probationary period has been extended according to the provisions of 3.8.6.6, 3.8.6.7 and 6.2.” This language has existed for many years, but the modification to 3.8.6.2 casts it in a new light. Since the language is “no later than” in 3.8.6.9 and “exceptional circumstances” in 3.8.6.2, the FH allows untenured associate professors who assess that they have met the criteria to apply for tenure one year earlier than their mandatory year.

In regard to candidates for professor, a slightly different phrase was used to clarify the permissible timing and minimal criteria for applications for promotion.

FH 3.8.7.2(a) states:

“Minimal criteria for consideration of appointment/promotion to the rank of professor are:

- (a) the appropriate earned terminal degree from an accredited institution, and at least ten (10) completed years of appropriate experience unless there is exceptional performance;”

This revision is consistent with the way in which Academic Affairs has interpreted 3.8.7.2(a) over the last decade or more. The addition of the word “completed” codifies the interpretation that ten years of completed experience are normally required. Academic Affairs has consistently interpreted “appropriate experience” as years spent in a tenure-line academic position. There have been exceptions to this rule, however, particularly in the fine and performing arts, where it is much more common to have a distinguished career with little or no employment as a faculty member. The phrase “exceptional performance” is consistent with standing interpretation as well. During the last few years, we have had a very limited number of outstanding faculty members promoted to professor without the requisite ten years of completed experience. In sum, the revisions to professor represent a welcome written statement of what has been the practice.

❖ I have heard that assistant professors can now go up for tenure “early?” Is this correct?

Yes. There was an important change in the tenure timeframe. For assistant professors, the major revision appears in FH 3.8.5.13 and allows assistant professors to request review for promotion to associate professor with tenure one year earlier than the mandatory year. If the assistant professor is not successful one year earlier, he/she may request review again in the mandatory year. Assistant professors who come in with no prior service credit and have no other changes to their tenure clock may request review in the fifth year of service rather than the sixth year.

The discussion in the Faculty Senate and in Academic Affairs dealt with two important items of interpretation in relation to this section. First, candidates coming up “early” (during their fifth year of service) must meet all of the criteria applied to candidates coming up in the mandatory year (during their sixth year of service). In other words, requirements are not pro-rated downward according to the number of years served before applying for tenure and promotion. Second, and conversely, candidates choosing to apply for tenure and promotion during their fifth year of service cannot be held to a higher standard of performance than candidates who apply during their sixth year.

❖ **Can untenured associate professors also go up for tenure early?**

Yes, but the FH language is not as straightforward as the language for assistant professors. Associate professors may either apply for tenure only or for tenure and promotion to professor if they assess that they qualify for promotion. See explanation under [criteria for promotion and tenure](#).

❖ **Are tenure and promotion for assistant professors now coupled?**

For assistant professors, they must come up for promotion at the time they are reviewed for tenure based on section 3.8.5.13, which includes this sentence: “An Assistant Professor must request review for promotion and tenure at the same time.”

❖ **Do untenured associate professors have to be ready for promotion to professor before they can apply for tenure?**

The answer is no. For untenured associate professors, a faculty member may come up for tenure but may choose not to apply for promotion to professor. Associate professors who are appointed without tenure must come up “for tenure no later than the fourth year of appointment except when the probationary period has been extended according to the provisions of 3.8.6.6, 3.8.6.7 and 6.2. (FH 3.8.6.9). Since the language is “no later than” in 3.8.6.9 and “exceptional circumstances” in 3.8.6.2, the FH also allows untenured associate professors who assess that they have met the criteria to apply for tenure one year earlier than their mandatory year. However, an associate professor who meets the criteria for professor may choose to request both tenure and promotion. See explanation under [criteria for promotion and tenure changes](#).

❖ **With the possibility of requesting early review, how do untenured faculty know what their mandatory year is?**

Two sections in Assistant and Associate Professor FH language were added for clarification.

For Assistant Professors section 3.8.5.14 brings together in one place language that had been scattered. 3.8.5.14 makes clear that “an Assistant Professor must be considered for tenure during his or her sixth year if he or she has not been granted tenure earlier (3.8.5.13). Under no circumstances should the length of the probationary period exceed seven years of full-time service, except when the probationary period has been extended according the provisions of 3.8.5.10, 3.8.5.11, and/or 6.2.” Section 3.8.5.5 is new and provides clarification that for faculty who are hired between January 1 and May 15, the partial academic year will not count as part of the probationary period.

Similar sections were added to Associate Professor in 3.8.6.9 which read “Associate Professors, not appointed with tenure, shall be reviewed for tenure no later than the fourth year of appointment except when the probationary period has been extended according the provisions of 3.8.6.6, 3.8.6.7 and 6.2.” Section 3.8.6.4 is new and provides clarification that for faculty who are hired between January 1 and May 15, the partial academic year will not count as part of the probationary period.

❖ **Can an Assistant Professor come up for tenure without being promoted to Associate Professor?**

The answer is no. The FH in section 3.8.5.13 is now explicit that a candidate must meet the criteria for Associate Professor as well as the criteria for academic tenure in order to be granted tenure. Long standing practice has not allowed being tenured while at the Assistant Professor rank, and FH language now reflects this practice.

❖ **Can departmental criteria require higher standards to earn promotion to Associate Professor and tenure if a faculty member comes up one year early?**

Both sections 3.7.2 (Tenure) and 3.8.3 (Tenure-Eligible Academic Ranks) state that the FH criteria is the basis for each academic department's criteria for tenure or promotion. The FH also has this sentence: "Departmental criteria may be more rigorous than Faculty Handbook criteria." Departmental criteria are by their nature more specific to the discipline(s) within the department and more detailed in description of standards which need to be met. What would not be acceptable would be statements that candidates coming up one year early must have more research or better teaching evaluations, etc. than candidates being reviewed in their mandatory year.

❖ **What happens if a candidate comes up for tenure and promotion one year early and does not receive it?**

Faculty may request review again in the mandatory year, and the PTC and/or department chair may be able to provide some guidance on what needs to be accomplished in the intervening year. Faculty would also have the right to grieve a negative decision.

❖ **How will a faculty member know if he/she is ready to come up for promotion and tenure?**

It is important for faculty members to determine in their own analysis if their accomplishments meet the FH and departmental criteria. It is also important to understand departmental norms, which the department chair and senior faculty can help to explain. Often colleagues who were reviewed successfully in previous years will be glad to share their documentation as examples.

❖ **Can members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee vote "no" on a review because they do not agree with the changes that permit early applications for tenure and promotion?**

The answer is no. The new policy on early review for tenure and promotion was discussed numerous times by Faculty Senate with opportunities for senators to seek departmental faculty input between meetings. In the end, the Senate recommended for the Provost's approval, the policy that is now part of the FH. Individual faculty members cannot decide to not follow the current FH policy. A demonstrable failure to follow policy would constitute a "material procedural flaw" (4.11.3.2) and would invalidate a recommendation by a PTC, chair, or dean.