

Tenure Statement
Department of Philosophy
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1. **Introduction**

Tenure recommendations are the responsibility of the tenured faculty of the department, and typically are considered in the fall semester of the candidate's sixth year of employment. The decision whether or not to recommend tenure is determined by vote of the tenured faculty, the numerical outcome of which is reported to the college executive committee together with other materials required by or in accord with college and university policy.

The chairperson's annual letters to the Dean recommending for or against reappointment provide information relevant to tenure. The university regards these letters as an important part of the record of communications between the department and the candidate. The chairperson's annual evaluation letters also contain information relevant to progress towards tenure. In addition, untenured department members may annually request a report on progress towards tenure from the tenured faculty.

In the fourth year of tenure-leading service the chairperson's letter recommending for or against reappointment will contain or be accompanied by a pre-tenure review covering research, teaching, and service. This review has much the same scope as the tenure review provided to the college executive committee in the sixth year of tenure-leading service, but omits outside review letters.

2. **General Observations**

The department has two major responsibilities: first, to teach a full range of undergraduate courses and conduct a substantial Ph.D.-granting graduate program; second, to carry out quality research published in or by highly rated national and international journals or presses. Since the faculty is small in number it is essential to the well-being of the department that each faculty member make significant contributions both to the undergraduate and graduate teaching programs, and to research publication. The size of our department also makes it important that each faculty member carry out significant service responsibilities within the department.

Since tenure is irrevocable under normal circumstances, tenure decisions have a critical impact on the long term quality and character of the department. Hence, tenure recommendations reflect the tenured faculty's judgment as to how the candidate for tenure is likely to serve departmental ends in future years, in particular in the areas of teaching and research, but also in the area of service. That judgment is based on an assessment of all professionally relevant aspects of the candidate's tenure-leading performance, and on those alone.

Finally, it should be noted that the conditions on satisfactory tenure-leading performance in teaching, research, and service expressed in this document are continuous with the standards used to evaluate the professional performance of all faculty members, tenured as well as untenured.

3. Teaching

Teaching is the department's first responsibility. The department needs to provide a diversified curriculum of well-taught undergraduate courses together with a program of graduate studies through which advanced students can become philosophers capable of carrying on the traditions of scholarship and teaching central to our profession.

For purposes of this document, teaching comprises performance in the classroom, philosophical interaction with students outside the classroom, at both graduate and undergraduate levels, and involvement in the graduate program, including work on doctoral dissertation committees.

3.1 Classroom Teaching

3.11 Undergraduate

Undergraduate classroom teaching covers (i) introductory courses, primarily in the 100-level curriculum, (ii) service courses, primarily in the 200-level curriculum, and (iii) courses for majors, primarily in the 300- and 400-level curriculum.

3.12 Graduate

Graduate classroom teaching covers (i) service and core classes at the 800-level, and (ii) research seminars at the 900-level.

3.13 Assessment of Classroom Teaching

Teaching quality at both the graduate and undergraduate levels is judged on the basis of: Student evaluations; faculty observation of classroom teaching; course design; literature selection; written classroom materials e.g., handouts, examinations, and paper assignments; preparation and supervision of teaching assistants; depth and range of mastery of subject matter; ability to explain subject matter; ability to motivate student interest in subject matter; and reliability in carrying out teaching functions.

3.2 Teaching Repertoire

A person's teaching repertoire is the set of courses with a recognized role in the curriculum which the person either teaches or is willing to teach as the need arises.

3.21 Assessment of Teaching Repertoire

The main judgment made about teaching repertoire is whether it is sufficiently broad relative to the overall teaching needs of the department, both graduate and undergraduate. A satisfactorily broad repertoire will generally include courses at each of the five levels of the curriculum distinguished above. Since the department is small, a repertoire is enhanced if it includes courses in a variety of disciplinary areas. It is enhanced if there are courses not yet taught by a faculty member, which are likely to be part of the future curriculum, and which there is good reason to believe that the faculty member would be willing and able to teach if the need to have them taught should arise.

3.22 Importance of Classroom Teaching and Teaching Repertoire

High quality classroom teaching at all levels and the development of a broad teaching repertoire are necessary for tenure.

3.3 Non-Classroom Teaching

3.31 Undergraduate

Non-classroom undergraduate teaching primarily comprises tutorials and contact with students for philosophical discussion e.g., as conducted in one's office. Assessments of these activities are based on student evaluations and reports, schedule of office hours and other scheduled student related activities, faculty observation, and information from the faculty member.

3.32 Graduate

Non-classroom graduate teaching includes the above in relation to graduate students and is assessed on a similar basis. It also includes work on dissertation committees. Assessment of this work is based on faculty observation (all committees include tenured faculty) and student evaluations.

3.33 Importance of Non-Classroom Teaching

Non-classroom graduate and undergraduate teaching in the form of philosophical discussion, written comments on student work in progress, etc. is expected of all faculty, and strong performance in this area is an enhancing factor of moderate importance. Solid performance on dissertation committees in one's area of disciplinary competence is a critical component of graduate teaching and is a normal expectation for tenure.

Summary

High quality and diversified graduate and undergraduate classroom teaching is generally necessary for tenure. Quality work on dissertation committees, and particularly on any which may fall within one's general research areas, also is necessary for tenure. Philosophical interaction with both graduate and undergraduate students is normally expected for tenure and good performance in this area enhances the prospect for tenure.

Exceptional performance as a graduate and undergraduate teacher, in and out of the classroom, especially if combined with significant service, can compensate for a merely acceptable research and publication record, and provide a basis for a positive tenure recommendation which otherwise would not be forthcoming. But normally no combination of teaching and service can compensate for a research and publication record which is not on its own at least acceptable.

4. Research and Publication

The research and publication conditions for tenure and for promotion to associate professor coincide, and are specified in the department's promotion statements.

5. **Research Support**

It is particularly important within a small department that faculty members be research resources for their colleagues. This sort of function is typically carried out through individual philosophical discussion, the reading of research in progress, and contributions to more general research discussions e.g., in colloquies and faculty research discussion groups. Contributions within this area are important for tenure and serve to enhance the prospects of tenure.

6. **Service**

In a small department service duties multiply for the faculty members willing and able to carry out those duties in a self-motivated and reliable manner if other members of the faculty fall short of this standard. Thus, service is especially important in our department and normally plays a significant role in tenure decisions.

Normally, minimal service contributions are expected through the third tenure-leading year, but thereafter tenure-leading faculty should assume fuller service duties, and should undertake normal service responsibilities, typically including full or primary responsibility for at least one important service function, in their fifth and sixth years.

Service will typically be assessed on the basis of (i) observations by the tenured faculty made at general departmental meetings concerning e.g., teaching policies, teaching assistant evaluations, (ii) observations made by tenured committee chairpersons and other tenured faculty sitting on various administrative committees e.g., curriculum committees, search committees, and (iii) the observations of the chairperson.

7. **A Concluding Observation**

A typical positive tenure record will include evidence of solid research accomplishments and capacities, of a research program which promises to be productive of regular high-quality publications, of strong classroom teaching together with a reasonable level of contact with students outside the classroom, of useful contributions to dissertation committees and to the graduate program in general, of responsible service to the department, and of philosophical interactions with colleagues of a kind which serve to contribute to the development of scholarship and research within the department.