

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Physics and Astronomy
Tenure and Tenured Promotion
Criteria and Guidelines

Last Revised: January 24, 2025

Criteria for Tenure and Tenured Promotion

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences maintains its own criteria and guidelines for promotion which can be found at the [Dietrich School governance page](#). The criteria and guidelines for promotion within the Department of Physics and Astronomy described in this document build upon the criteria and guidelines of the Dietrich School and are not in conflict with them.

(1) Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with Tenure

For promotion to the rank of Associate Professor with Tenure, an individual should have attained stature in their scholarly community, should have made important contributions to their field of academic inquiry, and should show evidence of having established a scholarly reputation at the national level. They should also demonstrate the ability to be effective as a teacher and/or mentor and have contributed to the University and to their profession through appropriate service.

(2) Promotion from Associate Professor with Tenure to Professor

For promotion to Professor, an individual should have attained eminence in their scholarly community, should have a record of significant and important contributions to their field of inquiry, and should show evidence of establishing a professional reputation at the national and international level. They should demonstrate continuing effectiveness as a teacher and/or mentor. The candidate is expected to be actively engaged in providing service to their professional community and making significant contributions to the University and Department through appropriate service and/or leadership roles.

Guidelines for Tenure and Tenured Promotion

In this section we briefly describe the procedures followed for promotion processes. Further relevant information is available in two supplemental documents. One outlines the contents of a promotion dossier (based upon the current version of the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Chair's Handbook) and the timeline for promotion procedures; the other describes the role and function of the mentoring committees in detail and provides examples of ways that candidates can demonstrate effectiveness in research, teaching and mentoring, and service.

- Each year, the mentoring committee shall provide a written report to the relevant voting faculty body (e.g., tenured faculty for promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure) outlining the progress of and guidance provided to their mentee. After approval by the Chair and by a vote of the relevant body, the report will be shared with the mentee and filed with the Chair's office.
- The voting body for consideration of mentoring reports and promotion of assistant professors will consist of the tenured members of the department. The voting body for consideration of mentoring reports and promotion of associate professors will consist of the full professors within the department.
- The Chair will meet annually with each candidate who may be eligible for promotion to discuss the report of their mentoring committee and to advise the candidate further on how they can best meet the criteria for promotion.
- During the candidate's third year as an assistant professor, the mentoring committee shall present a more detailed report on the progress of their mentee to the tenured faculty, which must vote on whether to approve the three-year reappointment of the candidate.
- Assistant professors who wish to be considered for early tenure or associate professors who wish to be considered for promotion to Professor in a given year shall engage with the department's Promotion Consideration Committee (or equivalent body if committees are reorganized) and the Chair according to the timeline specified in supplemental documents. If the candidate wishes to proceed based upon advice received from the Chair and the Committee, the candidate's mentoring committee and Promotion Consideration Committee shall work together to present a proposal to solicit external letters to the relevant voting body of the faculty. If this body votes to approve, or if an assistant professor has reached the standard date for promotion consideration taking into account any extensions of tenure clock, the preparation of the promotion dossier shall commence according to the relevant timeline.
- The candidate shall provide the relevant documentation for their dossier (as required by Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences procedures) to the department's Academic Operations Manager; the information required is outlined in a supplemental document.

- The department shall solicit letters from external referees. The number of letters shall be consistent with the regulations of the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and Office of the Provost. In general, we request 5-6 letters from individuals recommended by the candidate and approximately twice as many from other reviewers. The final decision concerning the list of external referees is made by the Chair.
- The candidate shall present a colloquium about their research before their promotion case is presented to the relevant voting body.
- The mentoring committee shall prepare a report with their recommendation concerning promotion and present it to a meeting of the relevant voting body. That body shall then vote on whether to approve promotion. Voting shall be conducted in such a manner as to ensure anonymity (except if submitting one or more minority reports) but otherwise will follow the standard voting procedures described in the departmental bylaws.
- Individuals who vote contrary to the majority and/or abstain from the vote will be offered the opportunity to provide their individual minority report(s) by the Academic Operations Manager (the Chair is not notified of the votes of individual faculty). As is required by Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and Office of the Provost, the individuals who submit minority reports will not be anonymous. The minority report(s) will be delivered to the Chair and become part of the dossier that is submitted to the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and higher administration. While the Chair may address the points raised in the minority report(s), the Chair may not refuse to include the minority report(s) in the dossier. Individuals who wish to submit minority report(s) may do so within 5 days of being contacted via email by the Academic Operations Manager of the department.
- The Chair will report on the department's recommendation to the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences as part of the promotion dossier. As required by the Provost's Office, their cover letter will describe both the recommendation of the department and the Chair's disposition as an individual on the promotion case.