

Consideration for Full Time Faculty Tenure and Promotion (Fall, 2013)

Now that consideration for tenure is scheduled for the same time as consideration for promotion for full time faculty, it is appropriate to clarify the standards for the two determinations.

While the guidance outlined below properly notes that judgments on tenure and promotion are in fact two distinct acts, and while it is recognized that tenure is an "up or out" determination while promotion decisions can, arguably, be deferred if necessary to develop a case, the guidance recognizes that there is tremendous overlap between the two standards. Therefore, as the guidance cautions, we should be very wary of granting tenure without promotion, just as we are well advised to be wary of promotion without tenure.¹

As you deliberate, it is important that you keep in mind that the reasons for the different conclusions will have to be justified under the standards articulated below. Moreover, when evaluating tenure and promotion at the same time, it should be noted that the few distinctions made between the two standards are of limited significance, especially in view of the seven year tenure track. Finally, the guidance cautions us not to grant "tenure to those whose capacity for promotion to senior rank is judged to be limited."

The primary criteria for tenure and promotion decisions are articulated in the Queens College Personnel Guidelines ("Guidelines") dated February 5, 2008, and the "Statement for the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York" ("Statement") dated September 22, 1995. (Additional guidance may be found in the Kahn memo of 1950, the contractual agreement between the PSC and CUNY, and Queens College Governance documents.)

QC Guidelines:

The Guidelines, in large part, address tenure and promotion together, and in both cases the candidate must demonstrate a solid track record in terms of both quantity and quality, and future career trajectory.

The distinctions in the criteria for teaching and service are extremely limited.² With respect to scholarship, the few distinctions that are made are the following:

- Scope of body of work: *Tenure* decisions consider the entire body of work of the candidate, whereas *promotion* decisions consider primarily work accomplished while at Queens College subsequent to the last promotion or initial appointment. (That said, care must be taken not to make the standard for promotion higher for new hires with significant tenure track service elsewhere.)
- Work in Progress: *Tenure* deliberations may consider work in progress that has been sent to external referees or that includes correspondence such as letters of intent and pre-contracts with prospective publishers, whereas for *promotion* deliberations forthcoming

¹ The guidance also notes that because it is difficult to deny tenure to a candidate who has received a promotion before the granting of tenure, promotion before tenure should be considered only in very special circumstances (i.e., supported by externally recognized scholarly or creative work that has been completed).

² For instance, the Guidelines note that promotion requires evidence of progressively higher achievements in teaching, and service expectations are progressive.

publications should be as complete as possible – that is reviewed and accepted by a reputable publisher (though works in progress may be considered regarding future directions in scholarly output, and works in progress at a previous promotion that resulted in publication may be considered); and

- **Timing:** The Guidelines also note that *tenure* is typically limited to six years of work and is an “up or out” determination, whereas *promotion* decisions can be deferred if necessary to develop a case.

CUNY Statement:

While the Statement advises that when considering promotion or tenure, personnel committees should bear in mind that the two judgments represent two distinct acts, it also specifically states that the criteria established for reappointment and tenure apply equally to decisions on promotion.³ Thus, the Statement recognizes that “just as it would be unwise to promote those whose qualities for tenure are questionable, so it would be equally ill-advised to grant tenure to those whose capacity for promotion to senior rank is judged to be limited”. This point is of greater significance now that we have moved to a 7 year tenure clock and where tenure and promotion are considered at exactly the same time.

Conclusion:

CUNY’s move to a 7-year tenure clock was welcome. The shorter 5-year clock in place prior to that too often put us in the difficult position of having to make tenure decisions before some candidates really had the opportunity to establish solid track records and trajectories as scholars and teachers. Now, except under unusual circumstances, we do not need to take a chance on a candidate who has not established a significant body of work beyond the dissertation, established themselves as an independent scholar, demonstrated the ability to publish or produce creative works, and shown the potential for continued future productivity.

Assuming the candidate has, subsequent to his/her initial appointment at Queens College, accomplished the requisite work and demonstrated the other skills related to teaching and service while at Queens College, the only meaningful difference between the deliberations for tenure and promotion when they are considered at the same time, is that we can consider work in progress for tenure but not promotion. Thus, given the 7 year clock (and time to perform the requisite scholarship), the circumstances under which someone would be granted tenure but not promotion should be very limited. For example, this might be appropriate where external factors kept a candidate from bringing work to completion and we judged that work would have been completed except for those circumstances. Even then, it may be argued, that under such a scenario, seeking an extension of the tenure clock⁴ would seem to be a better solution than tenuring a candidate but not promoting them and risking the granting of “tenure to those whose capacity for promotion to senior rank is judged to be limited.”

³ The only guidance provided in the Statement with respect to promotion to Associate Professor is that “[t]he candidate shall present evidence of scholarly achievement following the most recent promotion, in addition to evidence of continued effectiveness in teaching; the candidate should thus meet the qualifications required above . . . for tenure [which include teaching effectiveness and scholarship and professional growth, service to the institution and service to the public].” It also recognizes that judgments on promotion should be sufficiently flexible to allow for a judicious balance among excellence in teaching, scholarship, and other criteria.

⁴ Such an extension would ordinarily require CUNY OAA approval.