

QUEENS COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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To: Deans Philip Anderson, Tamara Evans, Don Scott, and Tom Strekas

From: Evangelos J. Gizis, Interim Provost

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Re: Policy on hiring of ABD's for professorial positions

A number of departments have indicated that it is the practice in their disciplines to consider for professorial positions at the assistant professor level applicants who are in doctoral programs, but have not completed their dissertations and accordingly do not yet have their PhD's – i.e., “all but dissertations” (ABD's). This raises a number of concerns.

First of all, if a department wishes to consider such applicants, the advertisement for the position must reflect that, stating something like “earned PhD expected by time of appointment,” not merely, “PhD required.” Departments should be aware that such ads may generate a large number of inappropriate applications from persons who have no realistic chance of earning a PhD by the specified date.

Second, an offer can be made to an ABD only if the candidate is exceptional and if there is clear documented evidence that the PhD will be awarded before the start date, for example, by August 31 for an appointment September 1. Such documentation should include a letter from the dissertation advisor and a table of contents and already-completed chapters from the dissertation. The offering letter should state clearly that the offer is contingent on the candidate's receiving an earned PhD from their university by the date of appointment.

Third, if the dissertation is not completed in time, so that the PhD is in fact is in fact not awarded before the start date, August 31 in the example above, the department could either withdraw the offer or, in exceptional cases, recommend to the Dean that the applicant be appointed as substitute Instructor, at a correspondingly lower salary. This recommendation should explain why the PhD was not yet awarded (normally this would be because the dissertation was not yet completed) and evidence that it will be awarded (normally, that the dissertation would be completed) within a reasonable period of time. If there is strong evidence that the dissertation will be completed and the

PhD awarded before the end of the semester, December 15 in the example, the candidate may be appointed as substitute Instructor for one semester. Such an appointment will not normally be renewed.

Fourth, although the substitute Instructor appointment carries no further commitment to the candidate, a decision may be made, subject to discussion among the department, dean, and provost, to appoint the candidate as assistant professor for the following semester. This appointment can only be made if: a) the requirements for the PhD are in fact completed before the end of the semester (December 15 in the example), as documented by an official stamped letter from the registrar of the university involved stating that the candidate has completed all requirements for the PhD degree; and b) the candidate's teaching and other performance is acceptable.

Thank you for communicating this policy to your departments.