

Policies and Standards for Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure

Department of Physics

University of Colorado Boulder

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[teaching sections updated/approved by physics vote on Mar 24, 2023]

Preamble

These Departmental by-laws, policies or rules are subject to the current Laws and Actions of the Regents and to other University policies and procedures as described generally in the Faculty Handbook and as subsequently revised. Each Departmental by-law, policy or rule is intended to be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with current Laws and Actions of the Regents and other University policies and procedures. In the event of a conflict, Regental laws and actions and other policies and procedures of the University will control.

Introduction

This document is intended to provide newly appointed tenure track faculty members of the Department of Physics information to help them better understand the merit-based standards applied by the department and the criteria employed to establish whether they have been met, in cases involving reappointment, promotion and/or the awarding of continuous tenure. This information will add detail specific to the profession of physics and the department. It is meant to complement the standards printed in the **STANDARDS, PROCESSES, AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT** (Source: Regent Action 10/22/82, 8/14/86) in the 1988 edition of the University of Colorado *Faculty Handbook*, Section III, pages 28 and 29:

Continuous Tenure: Tenure may be awarded only to faculty members with demonstrated meritorious performance in each of the three areas of teaching, research or creative work, and service, and **demonstrated excellence** in **either** teaching, or research or creative work.

Promotion to Associate Professor: Associate professors should have the terminal degree appropriate to their field or its equivalent, considerable successful teaching experience, and **promising accomplishment** in research.

Promotion to Professor: Professors should have the terminal degree appropriate to their field or its equivalent and (A) a record that, taken as a whole is judged to be excellent: (B) a record of significant contribution to both graduate and undergraduate education, unless individual or departmental circumstances can be shown to require a stronger emphasis, or singular focus, on one or the other; and (C) a record, since receiving tenure and promotion to associate professor, that indicates substantial, significant, and continued growth, development, and accomplishment in teaching, research, scholarship or creative work, and service.

This document addresses three concerns:

Departmental Standards: From the department's perspective, what constitutes *demonstrated meritorious performance* in the teaching of physics, research in physics, and service, and *demonstrated excellence* in either teaching or research? What constitutes *promising accomplishment* in research? What is meant by *outstanding accomplishment* in physics teaching and in physics research? It will be understood throughout that the *appropriate terminal degree* for faculty in Physics is the doctorate in physics or in a closely related discipline.

Documentation and Evidence: What documents are included in the dossier and what kinds of evidence are evaluated by the department when reviewing faculty to determine their qualifications for reappointment, promotion and/or tenure?

Processes: What processes are followed by the department when reviewing faculty to determine their qualifications for reappointment, promotion and/or tenure?

Departmental Standards

The interpretations given terms such as **meritorious, excellent and outstanding** when a Physics faculty member is reviewed for promotion or tenure must be consistent with the expressed goals of the University of Colorado at Boulder and of the Department of Physics. The university is the premier center for higher education and scholarship in Colorado. In terms of the quality of its faculty and students it now ranks among the top group of AAU Public Research Universities. The *goals statements* issued by the university are unambiguous: The University of Colorado at Boulder seeks to become a peer of the very small set of elite public universities.

The department has parallel ambitions. We wish to position ourselves among the top ten departments of physics in public universities. The standards we use to establish measures of accomplishment in research for Physics faculty seeking promotion or tenure will be as stringent as the standards applied in those departments. Teaching in the department has two primary components. Physics faculty are expected to teach effectively in courses offered by the department at both the undergraduate and the graduate level. The criteria for assessing classroom teaching effectiveness and the methods used to establish individual performance measures will be consistent with standards and methods used generally by academic units at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Physics faculty are also expected to perform effectively as doctoral student research directors. This teaching function is essential to the continued health of the profession of physics and standards for assessing individual success will be commensurate with those employed by other leading departments of physics.

With these comments in mind, the **Department of Physics Standards** for faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure are:

[Comprehensive Review for Reappointment]

Tenure track faculty are required to undergo a comprehensive reappointment review no later than two years, but optimally three years before their mandatory tenure review. The intent of this review is to assess whether a candidate is making normal progress toward tenure. Consequently, the **Department of Physics Standards** for tenure described below are the ultimate referents. A recommendation for reappointment implies that in the department's judgment, should a candidate continue his or her demonstrated progress, he or she can reasonably expect to be recommended for tenure at the appropriate time.

[Tenure]

The department emphasizes teaching and research equally. Our goal is to develop a faculty comprised of outstanding teacher/researchers. It is characteristic of the discipline of physics, however, that evidence of eventual accomplishment in research appears in early career. Consequently, junior-rank Physics faculty should have established a strong research record prior to their mandatory tenure review.

1. **Teaching**

To satisfy *meritorious performance in teaching* standards, Physics faculty must demonstrate an ability to teach effectively in a range of formal courses given by the department, and they must show that they can successfully guide graduate students in their doctoral research work. It is important that Physics faculty perform ably in both the professional training and formal classroom aspects of physics teaching. This level of accomplishment is clarified and specified further in the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document, which outlines the expectations of accomplishment across each of the [dimensions of teaching](#) practice.

In order to satisfy *excellence* in teaching standards, physics faculty must demonstrate exceptional skill in teaching a wide range of courses in both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum and show that they can successfully guide doctoral student research. This level of accomplishment is clarified and specified further in the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document, which outlines the expectations of accomplishment across each of the [dimensions of teaching](#) practice.

2. **Research**— To satisfy *meritorious performance in research* standards, Physics faculty must have established a strong record of research accomplishment. Research should be of high quality in the judgment of peers. In the main, their major research results should be published in the primary refereed journals appropriate to their field of interest. If special conditions require that faculty carry out their research within a group structure, it is essential that they identify their specific responsibilities and contributions to the success of the overall program. Since the results of peer review of research proposals are one important indicator of quality, success in acquiring external

research funding will be recognized as partial but significant evidence of research merit. To achieve *demonstrated excellence in research* standards, in addition to satisfying the above criteria, Physics faculty should have a record in research which can be compared favorably to that of the top group of tenured faculty in their field, here and elsewhere.

3. **Service**— Since junior faculty must devote most of their efforts to teaching and to developing a strong research program, the requirement that they meet *meritorious performance in service* standards can be satisfied by their effective participation in Department committees.

[Promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure]

The tenure review will usually occur in parallel with a review for promotion from assistant to associate professor. In such cases we will assume that promotion accompanies the award of tenure, since the conditions placed on the award of tenure include and are more stringent than those governing promotion to associate professor.

[Promotion to Associate Professor without Tenure]

Occasionally, appointments are made at the assistant professor rank of somewhat more senior individuals who have taught successfully at the university level, and/or have established an extraordinary record of scholarship and national recognition, comparable to that of Physics faculty currently holding the rank of associate professor. In such cases it may be appropriate to consider early promotion to associate professor without tenure, the decision on tenure to be made later.

1. **Teaching.** To satisfy the *considerable successful teaching experience* requirement, candidates for early promotion must have taught courses from the regular undergraduate and/or graduate physics curriculum at a recognized university or college for two or more years. In addition, they must teach effectively in courses given by the Department of Physics for at least one academic year before they can be reviewed for promotion. When otherwise outstanding faculty members are hired at the assistant professor rank with no prior formal teaching experience, after a period of employment in industry or the federal government, some teaching credit may be given if they have had extensive experience in presenting colloquia and invited talks at meetings of professional organizations. However, these individuals will be required to teach effectively in the Department of Physics for a minimum of two academic years before promotion review, unless, in the judgment of the Physics Evaluation Committee, they manage to demonstrate exceptional promise as classroom teachers during their first year in the department. This level of achievement is expected to match the level of ‘merit’ or higher for the cases of tenure, as clarified and specified further in the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document, which outlines the expectations of accomplishment across each of the [dimensions of teaching](#) practice. Although desirable, evidence of skill in directing doctoral research will not be required for promotion to associate professor with tenure.

2. **Research**— Consistent with the special conditions described above, while faculty being reviewed for early promotion to associate professor without tenure **may** have had university teaching experience, they **will** have established an extraordinary record of research accomplishment and have attracted national recognition. In fact, their research should be comparable in quality and extent with that of other Physics faculty in the same field, at the time the latter were promoted to associate professor and awarded tenure.

[Promotion to Professor]

Promotion to Professor in the Department of Physics serves as formal recognition by the university and the department of a faculty member's outstanding career achievements in physics teaching and research. There is no *normal* time schedule for promotion from associate professor to professor. In the following, we will assume that criteria for tenure have been satisfied and discuss the additional expectations required for promotion to professor that are imbedded in the resolution adopted at the February 17, 1994 meeting of the University of Colorado Board of Regents.

To qualify for promotion to the rank of professor, Physics faculty should possess:

1. **A record that, taken as a whole, is judged to be excellent**— Satisfaction of this requirement will be based on the cumulative significance and strength of the candidate's record since receipt of the Ph.D. in teaching, research, and service. Excellence will be defined in comparison to overall records established by other Physics faculty promoted to professor within the last 20 years. Materials which are to be considered for the determination include publication records, presentations, impact statistics, external letters, national recognition, external research funding, external and internal leadership roles, service responsibilities, outreach activities, student letters, course development, and the teaching record.
2. **A record of significant contribution to both graduate and undergraduate education, unless individual or departmental circumstance can be shown to require a stronger emphasis, or singular focus, on one or the other**— Satisfaction of this requirement will demand that a candidate must demonstrate an ability to teach effectively in a wide range of courses taken from both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Factors which are considered in judging whether the standards implied in the Board of Regent's resolution have been met, will include, but need not be limited to: the difficulty, diversity, number, and the importance of courses taught; student evaluations of teaching; demonstrated skill and experience in student advising; and peer evaluations of teaching. In addition, a candidate should have served and continue to serve capably, as thesis director for Physics doctoral students. Physics faculty are strongly encouraged to engage undergraduates in their research activities and

success in doing so will be regarded as a positive indicator of commitment to education on the part of the candidate. This level of accomplishment is clarified and specified further in the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document, which outlines the expectations of accomplishment across each of the [dimensions of teaching](#) practice. Physics faculty will not be recommended for promotion to Professor in the absence of credible and substantial evidence of their commitment to graduate research training in physics.

- 3. A record, since receiving tenure and promotion to associate professor, that indicates substantial, significant, and continued growth, development, and accomplishment in teaching, research, scholarship or creative work, and service—** A decision on whether the conditions of this requirement have been satisfied will be based on the results of a detailed examination of the candidate's overall record **since promotion to associate and the award of tenure.** The post-tenure record of the successful candidate will reflect a continued growth in teaching skills and a sustained commitment to education in the expanded sense, which includes education outside of as well as within the formal classroom setting. This level of accomplishment is clarified and specified further in the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document, which outlines the expectations of accomplishment across each of the [dimensions of teaching](#) practice. The post-tenure record of the successful candidate will reveal a continued growth in the significance and/or productivity of his or her research output. Other factors which will be regarded as positive indicators of success will include, but not be limited to: evidence of growth in range of research interest (i.e. new areas of inquiry); awards and other evidence of growing recognition by peers and the profession; and continued success in competition for external funding. Finally, it is expected that with the relaxation of the special demands placed upon the pre-tenured faculty member, the successful candidate for promotion to professor will have demonstrated a willingness to accept a more expansive service role in the department, the campus, and in the profession. An expansion of outreach and public service activity will also be treated as a strong positive factor.

Documentation and Evidence

The documents that Physics provides the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences when it recommends one of its faculty for promotion and/or tenure are listed in **Attachment I – DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS ON REAPPOINTMENT, TENURE AND PROMOTION.** In what follows we list the primary kinds of evidence considered relevant when the department decides whether to submit such a recommendation. In addition to these, candidates are encouraged to include material of their own choosing which they believe will be useful in evaluating them for reappointment, promotion, and/or the award of tenure. They may introduce such material at the department-level review stage or at either of the two higher levels of review. However, materials provided at a higher level shall also be made available to all other bodies reviewing the candidate.

External Letters of Evaluation: At least six letters of evaluation are required in each case involving promotion and/or tenure, none in comprehensive reappointment reviews. Letters are solicited from recognized leaders in the appropriate physics subfield.

Evidence of Teaching Quality:

Evidence of teaching quality shall be solicited from at least three data sources: peers, the instructor under review, and students. Processes for data collection among these sources are outlined in the [departmental procedures](#) for teaching evaluation.

These approaches may include but are not limited to:

- Peer review / class observations
- Documenting external recognition, as evidenced by external letters, or peer reviewed teaching publications (not physics education research).
- Self-reflection, portfolio reviews
- Evidence of course development
- Enumerating teaching prizes
- Analysis of student ratings from FCQs (both quantitative and qualitative responses)
- Classroom interviews
- Student letters.

Further discussions of levels of accomplishment and expectations for ratings of *merit* and *excellence* in teaching at various levels can be found on the departmental [standards of teaching quality](#) document.

Evidence of Research Quality:

A. Publication Record

1. Publications in refereed journals—quantity; quality and apparent significance based on peer reviews and information contained in letters from external evaluators.
2. Books containing original work, and including advanced texts; monographs; invited articles; invited papers in conference proceedings.
3. Contributed articles appearing in published conference proceedings.

B. Contract and Grant Activity

1. Externally funded research programs, their number and levels of funding; periods of time for which programs have been funded; numbers of graduate students, post-docs, and visiting faculty supported under grants.
2. Evidence of continued proposal activity.

C. Awards and Participation in Professional Research Activities

1. Research prizes and awards.
2. Invited participation in professional conferences; attendance at professional conferences; research talks given at other institutions and/or locally.
3. Editorial work requiring professional research expertise.

Evidence of Service Contribution:

1. Department and University Service—Service on Department, College and University committees.
2. Professional Service Activities—Membership on professional society committees; refereeing of journal articles and research proposals; talks given for public service in a professional capacity.
3. Public Service Activities—Interaction with local schools; consulting with federal, state and local government bodies; service on local government committees.

Timetable for Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure

Individuals who are hired as beginning assistant professors will have at least one evaluation for reappointment prior to a mandatory tenure decision. The last reappointment prior to a tenure decision must be based upon comprehensive evaluation. A standard pattern would be for an assistant professor to receive a three- or four-year appointment initially and, upon positive comprehensive review at the end of this first appointment, to receive a second appointment that would extend to the mandatory-tenure decision.

Tenure is required by the end of the seventh year. Faculty members are typically evaluated for tenure in the seventh year; the seven-year probationary period will include any years of credit toward tenure that are specified in writing at the time of hiring. In unusual cases, tenure can be awarded a year early. However, because it is customary for review committees to apply standards strictly and without discounted expectations based on shorter time in rank, it is inadvisable for faculty members to seek early tenure unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

Typically, promotion to associate professor is considered simultaneously with the consideration of tenure, although formally the two are separate decisions. Under unusual circumstances, individuals may be hired as associate professors without tenure (mainly because the university is reluctant to hire individuals without a probationary period prior to tenure), and in this case the issue of tenure is separated fully from the issue of promotion to associate professor.

There is no mandatory point of decision for promotion to professor. A customary waiting interval is approximately equal to the interval between the ranks of assistant professor and associate professor, because significant incremental achievement is expected between ranks. In unusual cases, an individual can be considered for promotion to professor after only a few years in rank as an associate professor, but this is not advisable on a routine basis because review committees can be expected to apply criteria strictly and not in such cases take into account shorter time in rank. Individuals who have doubts about the timing of promotion should seek advice from their Chair, who may appoint an ad hoc personnel committee to evaluate the situation.

Any individual can ask to be considered for promotion or tenure at any time and the request will be considered by the department unless it is contrary to the rules of the university. Individuals who believe they are promotable or tenurable should not hesitate to ask their Chair for an evaluation.

The Departmental Review Process

The Department Administrative Secretary begins assembling the documentation (see Attachment I) during May for each personnel action review planned for the succeeding academic year. At that time the Chair requests lists of potential external evaluators from groups of senior faculty having research interests that overlap those of the candidates for

review. The candidates are asked to provide lists of their own. The Chair chooses from these lists, six evaluators and two backup evaluators for each candidate for promotion and/or tenure, and three evaluators and one backup evaluator for each candidate for comprehensive review. In making the final selection of external evaluators, the Chair is guided primarily by the opinions of the Department Evaluation Committee and of senior faculty in the candidates' fields of specialization. In addition, the Chair seeks advice from the Chair's Advisory Committee (CAC), and from the faculty at large, whether they are members of the Regular or Special Physics Faculty (see the document **RULES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS (RPPDP)** for a definition of these terms). The primary goal is to solicit evaluations from recognized leaders in the candidates' fields of research.

The Department Evaluation Committee (made up of five members of the Regular Physics Faculty selected on an annual basis by the Chair) reviews the assembled documentation for each candidate in early October. The Evaluation Committee passes on its written recommendations for action to the Chair, usually during the latter part of October. The Chair then calls CAC, which carries out an independent review of the documentation, meets with the Chair of the Evaluation Committee to go over that body's recommendations, and then votes on each proposed personnel action. These become the primary items of business at the next regular meeting of the Physics Faculty, to which all members of the Regular and Special Physics Faculty are invited excepting the individuals undergoing review. After that meeting, sealed ballots containing the personnel action questions are issued to each voting member of the Faculty. (See **RPPDP** for definitions of the Voting Faculty, and in particular Rule 14, which defines the eligibility standards for faculty voting in cases involving appointment, reappointment, promotion, and the awarding of tenure.) Recommendations bearing on a mandated tenure review or a comprehensive reappointment review will be forwarded to the Dean independent of outcome. Otherwise, a favorable departmental recommendation for an appointment, a reappointment, a promotion, or a decision on the early award of tenure will be transmitted to the Dean only if it has been approved by a two-thirds majority.

After the voting results have been tabulated, the Chair writes a cover letter specific to each candidate recommended by the department for appointment, reappointment, promotion, or the award of tenure. In this, the Chair summarizes the recommendations made by the Physics Evaluation Committee and CAC, reports on the strength of the faculty vote, interprets the tone of the recommendations for action found in the letters written by the external evaluators along with the commends meant to establish their credentials, and adds his or her own impressions of the strengths and possible weaknesses of the candidate under consideration. In addition, as per instruction by the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, the cover letter will describe the relative value placed by the Department of Physics on the various kinds of physics publications, how it assesses individual contributions to jointly authored publications, and what level of accomplishment is normally expected in the best departments of physics for successful review at the level of appointment being recommended.

The cover letters are added to the otherwise complete personnel files. The Department Administrative Secretary checks each file to ensure that it is complete and organized in

compliance with the index provided by the College of Arts & Sciences, completes the check list, attaches a completed list to each file, and then forwards the files to the office of the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences who assumes responsibility for the next level of review.

Review Above the Level of the Department

Upon receipt of the candidate's file from the department, the Dean refers the case to a standing college committee (Dean's Personnel Committee), which discusses the case and votes on it. The Dean then writes a letter to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The Vice Chancellor's office receives files on all personnel decisions from all colleges on the campus. The Vice Chancellor relies heavily on the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC) which considers all cases for comprehensive reappointment, promotion and tenure. The VCAC discusses each case in detail and votes on the disposition of the case. The vote is considered a recommendation to the Vice Chancellor, who may or may not accept the recommendation. The Vice Chancellor's decision is relayed to the Chancellor.

Beyond the Vice Chancellor's level, review occurs by the Chancellor, the President, and the Regents. However, review above the Vice Chancellor's level at present (1992/93) is typically *pro forma*. Difficult cases may be scrutinized by all levels, but the typical case is not usually examined closely at higher levels.

A negative decision by any level of review can be overruled by a positive decision at a higher level. For example, a negative decision by the department could be overruled by the Dean or by the Vice Chancellor. Similarly, a positive decision at any level can be overruled by a negative decision at a higher level. When any decision is overruled, the case is sent back to the lower level with advice from the upper level and a request for clarification, reconsideration, or additional information. The case is then reconsidered by the lower level and forwarded again to the upper level for final review. The rights of appeal for rejected candidates are outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

Return of cases from an upper level to a lower level cannot always be taken as a sign of weakness in the case. Sometimes, review committees find critical pieces of information missing from the file and ask for additional information, even though they fully expect to approve the case. Individuals under review should not be unduly concerned by a request for additional information, unless the request is accompanied by a negative vote from a review committee.

The candidate is directly advised through the Chair by the Dean's office of all review committee decisions. In addition, the candidate will receive a copy of the letter that passes from the Dean to the Vice Chancellor and will be notified of the reasons for any negative action or concern on the part of the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee about a degree of documentation.

Personnel cases are prepared in the fall semester of the year before they take effect. The order of preparation is typically by increasing rank: comprehensive review, promotion to

associate professor with tenure, promotion to professor. Under the current scheduling system, the comprehensive reappointment cases will leave the Department in October and the professor cases may leave the department as late as January in the year of the proposed personnel action.


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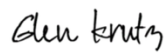
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