Introduction

The University of Southern Mississippi Faculty Handbook includes statements regarding (1) Evaluation Standards, (2) Eligibility for Promotion, (3) Credit for Prior Accomplishment, (4) Early Promotion, and (5) Denial of Promotion. The processes for submitting applications for tenure and promotion are also described. According to the Faculty Handbook, tenure and promotion are two separate issues evaluated by the same process.

University policy requires that academic units formulate standards reflecting any considerations specific to their disciplines, provided that they do not conflict with university standards. Promotion in academic rank requires demonstrable merit, on a continuing basis, in the stated categories of evaluation.

Assessment for Tenure and Promotion in the Department of Physics and Astronomy

Candidates for tenure and promotion will be judged based upon the quality, effectiveness and scope of their research, teaching and service. The typical successful candidate is expected to demonstrate “satisfactory” achievement in all three areas according to annual evaluations.

The expectations of the department for the third-year review, tenure and promotion to each rank are described below.

Third Year Review

A non-tenured faculty member holding a tenure-track position will be evaluated for progress toward tenure during the third year following the initial appointment. This review will employ annual evaluations and a dossier provided by the faculty member. Upon submission of the dossier, the Departmental Personnel Committee (see the Faculty Handbook) will assess these materials and make its recommendation. A positive review will reflect the fact that the faculty member is making satisfactory progress towards tenure. If the faculty member is not making satisfactory progress towards tenure, the Committee will describe the deficiencies and advise the faculty member on improvements in these areas. The Chair of the department will write a separate letter of recommendation and these departmental recommendations will be submitted to the College Advisory Council (CAC).
Tenure

A faculty member who holds a tenure track position and who does not have tenure can apply for tenure with or without promotion. The Departmental Personnel Committee, the Chair and CAC will make separate recommendations for tenure and promotion utilizing annual evaluations and a tenure and promotion dossier submitted by the candidate. Tenure criteria generally conform to those for promotion to Associate Professor, as discussed below. Recommendation for tenure, in addition, reflects a positive assessment of the candidate’s collegiality and potential for ongoing achievement in the areas of research, teaching and service.

Promotion to Associate Professor

The Departmental Personnel Committee and the Chair will consider the following criteria in formulating recommendations regarding promotion to Associate Professor. The candidate’s dossier and annual evaluations will be employed in this process.

Except as noted, no single criterion should be regarded as an absolutely necessary condition. The evaluation may involve additional relevant factors as warranted.

Research and Scholarship

(1) Quality, quantity and chronology of publications in refereed journals
(2) Presentations in state, regional, national and international conferences and workshops, seminars and publications in conference proceedings
(3) Submission of proposals for research and/or student support

Publication in refereed journals is essential. The typical successful candidate will publish at least one paper per year on the average.

Submission for external funding is essential. This proves that the candidate is trying to establish a research effort independent of initial support from the university. While receiving external funding strengthens the candidate’s case, it is not essential in order to achieve promotion.
Teaching

(1) Teaching of service courses (such as PHY 111/112, AST 111/112 and PHY 201/202)
(2) Teaching of upper-division undergraduate physics courses
(3) Teaching of graduate courses
(4) Development of undergraduate or graduate courses (including laboratory courses)
(5) Mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students in research
(6) Quality and effectiveness of teaching

Evidence of teaching effectiveness can include (i) satisfactory student evaluations of classroom teaching, (ii) satisfactory in-class observation, (iii) outcome of student research such as student presentations in conferences and publications with students, (iv) letters of recommendation from former students (if available) who are not currently taking classes or working under the supervision of the candidate, and/or (v) a teaching portfolio submitted as part of the candidate’s dossier. The typical successful candidate will have received “satisfactory” or higher rankings on annual evaluations.

Service

(1) Serving on departmental, college and university committees
(2) Professional outreach such as presentations to the general public, including K-12
(3) Participation in state, regional, national and international organizations in his/her area of expertise (by, for example, serving as a referee for articles or grant proposals) and/or related student societies

Letters of Recommendation

While there is no requirement for external letters of recommendation when applying for promotion to Associate Professor, it will strengthen the case of the candidate if such letters are available (especially from persons other than former Ph.D./postdoctoral advisors). Letters from former students or postdoctoral fellows are acceptable as testament to the teaching and mentoring ability of the candidate, but not as assessments of the candidate’s research.

Early Promotion

It is possible for a candidate to apply for an early promotion to Associate Professor, as described in the Faculty Handbook. In this case the candidate is expected to have an exceptionally strong record of refereed publication and a substantial amount of external research funding.
Promotion to Professor

The Departmental Personnel Committee and the Chair will consider the following criteria in formulating recommendations regarding promotion to Full Professor. The candidate’s dossier and annual evaluations will be employed in this process.

Except as noted, no single criterion should be regarded as an absolutely necessary condition. The evaluation may involve additional relevant factors as warranted.

Research and Scholarship

1. Sustained publication record in refereed national and international journals
2. Sustained record of presentations in state, regional, national and international conferences and workshops, seminars and publication in conference proceedings
3. Evidence that the candidate’s research is nationally and internationally recognized and has made an impact in his/her field of research
4. Sustained record of submission of proposals to external funding agencies and receipt of external funding
5. Letters of recommendation from peers who are recognized as leaders in the candidate’s field of research

The department will not set a minimal required number for refereed publications. The department will consider an average of two refereed national and/or international journal papers per year as a good record of publication.

The candidate will request three letters of recommendation from recognized authorities in his/her field of research. The candidate will also submit six additional names of recognized authorities in his/her field of research to the Departmental Personnel Committee. The Committee will choose three people from this list and will request three more letters of recommendation from them. The level of recognition of the candidate’s research will be assessed utilizing the submissions of the reviewers. The candidate’s Ph.D. advisor, postdoctoral advisor, and current or former students and postdoctoral fellows cannot serve as reviewers.
Teaching

(1) Teaching of undergraduate and graduate courses
(2) Development of undergraduate and graduate courses
(3) Sustained record of effectiveness in teaching
(4) Sustained record of mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in research
(5) Graduating M.S. students

Evidence of teaching effectiveness can include (i) satisfactory student evaluations of classroom teaching, (ii) satisfactory in-class observation, (iii) outcome of student research such as student presentations in conferences and publications with students, (iv) letters of recommendation from former students (if available) who are not currently taking classes or working under the supervision of the candidate, and/or (v) a teaching portfolio submitted as part of the candidate’s dossier. The typical successful candidate will have received “satisfactory” or higher rankings on annual evaluations.

Since the department does not have a stand-alone Ph.D. program, the candidate is not required to graduate Ph.D. students. The candidate must have graduated at least two M.S. students (Thesis or Project option) and/or Ph.D. students at the time of application for a full professorship.

Service

(1) Serving on college and university committees, in addition to departmental service
(2) Professional outreach such as presentations to the general public, including K-12
(3) Participation in state, regional, national and international organizations in his/her area of expertise
(4) Serving in a leadership role in state, regional, national and international organizations in his/her area of expertise
(5) Serving as reviewer of articles in refereed journals and proposals for funding agencies

Serving in a leadership role can involve student-oriented societies such as the Society of Physics Students, professional societies such as American Institute of Physics, organizing committees and/or international advisory committees of regional, national and international meetings, conferences and workshops.