

**DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY  
SUPPLEMENT TO THE MTSU POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
FOR PROMOTION OF TENURED AND TENURABLE FACULTY  
AND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR TENURE**

(revision 18 May 2021)

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The Department of Physics & Astronomy has adopted enhancements to the University guidelines for tenure and promotion of our faculty. The combined documents shall constitute the guidelines and policies by which our promotion and tenure decisions will be made. In addition to the enhancements, we provide the definitions and the processes by which we will interpret and execute the MTSU and Departmental policies.

**I. Physics and Astronomy policy for formation and procedures of the Promotion and Tenure Review Committee**

- a) The department has approved the use of one committee for reviewing and making recommendations for both promotion and tenure of our faculty. The Committee will consist of all eligible tenured faculty members in the department having a rank of Associate or Full Professor, except for the department chair.
- b) Neither candidates applying for tenure and/or promotion, the department chairperson, nor faculty members holding administrative appointments at the college level or above may be members of the committee.
- c) All committee members will review and vote for candidates applying for tenure and for promotion to Associate Professor and for renewal of tenure-track faculty.
- d) Only Full Professors will review and vote for candidates applying for promotion to Full Professor. During P&T committee discussions and voting on individuals applying for Full Professor, Associate Professors should not be present.
- e) For purposes of deliberation and voting, at least 2/3 of committee members will constitute a quorum for votes on tenure and/or promotion to Associate

votes count towards the quorum, but abstentions do not count as either positive or negative votes. A simple majority will determine the recommendation of the committee.

- f) When committee members are unable to attend a meeting, proxy votes will be allowed, but must be provided in writing to the committee chair prior to the meeting.
- g) The vote tallies supporting a candidate for tenure and/or promotion and approving the resultant evaluation letter will be reported in the recommendation letter.

## **II. Physics and Astronomy Definition of National Recognition**

The Physics and Astronomy Department considers the dissemination of knowledge through high-quality, peer-reviewed research to be the primary criterion by which research/scholarship activity of its faculty will be judged.

Because there is no single factor that indicates whether a candidate's research/scholarship has garnered "national recognition," the department will consider (but not be limited to) the following sources of evidence:

- a) Research publications in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. Numbers of citations and the Impact Factor of the journal may be reported in the OFD as available. If a candidate does not feel that these metrics fairly reflect the merit of his/her published work, then this should be explained in the OFD.
- b) Publication of peer-reviewed book chapters or books by recognized academic or trade presses. Numbers of citations should be reported in the OFD as available. If book reviews are available, those could be included in the supporting documents.
- c) Presentations before one's professional peers at national or international meetings/conferences/symposia and invited talks at other universities and research laboratories.
- d) A record of external funding for research/scholarly activities as appropriate. Funded grants carry more weight than unfunded grant proposals. The quality of the grant proposals, as demonstrated by the reviews, shall be considered in the evaluation.

The committee will consider the candidate's role in the reported work. For example, sole or senior authorship on a publication counts more than co-authorship. The candidate is encouraged to clearly indicate their role in multi-authored publications, presentations, and grants. Publications and presentations with the candidate's research students as first authors will be given weight equal to those where the candidate is first author.

If necessary, to fully document the scope and impact of a candidate's scholarly endeavors, alternative metrics that document the utility of a publication or other work

product may be cited as supplementary evidence of its quality.

Items contributing to a candidate's national reputation but more related to service than scholarship include:

- e) Funded external grants whose primary purpose is not research.
- f) Service as editor, associate editor, or editorial board member for a national/international journal.
- g) Service as an invited reviewer for journals or funding agencies.
- h) Presentation of invited lectures or seminars in community outreach, including social organizations and schools.

### **III. Physics and Astronomy Department policy for peer evaluation of teaching**

As required by MTSU promotion/tenure policy, the promotion/tenure dossier must include evidence of evaluation of teaching by faculty peers.

Each course taught by untenured, tenure-track faculty will be evaluated annually by two fulltime MTSU faculty members. At least one of the reviewers will be a current Physics and Astronomy faculty member, while the second can be chosen during consultation with the faculty member being evaluated. The evaluation will consist of a review of the course materials, including the syllabus, presentation files, and other visual aids as available. In addition, the reviewers will attend one meeting to evaluate presentation effectiveness. The date of this visit will be arranged in advance with the faculty member being evaluated.

A report will be completed and given to the faculty member being evaluated. The faculty member will have an opportunity to include a response to the evaluation, including details of how reported deficiencies will be addressed.

At the time of annual, pre-tenure, and promotion/tenure reviews, available reports will be examined by the P&T committee, and evidence of both observed quality and efforts to improve deficient areas in the evaluation of teaching.

Once faculty have been awarded tenure, the Physics and Astronomy P&T committee will provide peer review of teaching by request.

### **IV. Physics and Astronomy Department Guidelines for Tenure - differences from MTSU Policy 204**

Tenure in the Physics and Astronomy Department is awarded primarily based on high-quality professional productivity in research. "Creative activity" is not considered a relevant component of the job performance of Physics and Astronomy faculty with regard to tenure. In all cases, reference to creative activity and the criteria for evaluating it in MTSU Policy 204 will be disregarded.

Candidates for tenure in the Physics and Astronomy Department must demonstrate high-quality performance in research, manifested by consistent progress toward establishing an active research program in an area of specialization using evidence as outlined in Section II. Research progress beyond that achieved during graduate school/postdoctoral training is expected. New faculty with a strong publication record will be credited with their prior publications but will be expected to establish an active program of research and publication at MTSU to be considered for tenure. In all cases the quality of the research will be more important than the quantity, regardless of the absolute number of publications.

#### **V. Physics and Astronomy Department Guidelines for Promotion - differences from MTSU Policy 205**

Promotion in the Physics and Astronomy Department is based primarily on high-quality professional productivity in research. "Creative activity" is not considered a relevant component of the job performance with regard to promotion. In all cases, reference to creative activity and the criteria for evaluating it in MTSU Policy 205 will be disregarded.

Candidates for Associate Professor must demonstrate consistent sustained progress toward establishing an active research program in an area of specialization beyond that achieved during graduate school/postdoctoral training, as evidenced by a consistent record of high-quality peer reviewed publications. New faculty with a strong publication record will be credited with their prior publications but will be expected to establish an active program of research and publication at MTSU to be considered for promotion. In all cases the quality of the research will be more important than the quantity, regardless of the absolute number of publications.

Candidates for Full Professor must demonstrate evidence of sustained high-quality professional productivity in research and teaching, as well as ongoing excellence in service. The candidate will demonstrate a record of high-quality peer-reviewed publications in his/her area of research specialization that is recognized at the national level. Faculty hired at the Associate Professor level with a strong publication record will be credited with their prior publications but will be expected to maintain an active program of research and publication at MTSU to be considered for promotion. In all cases the quality of the research will be more important than the quantity, regardless of the absolute number of publications.

#### **VI. Procedures to ensure fairness and continuity of the review process leading to evaluation for promotion and tenure**

Progress of untenured faculty towards tenure and promotion is evaluated annually by both the Physics and Astronomy Chair and the P&T committee. For junior faculty proceeding towards the final evaluation for promotion and/or tenure, an annually updated dossier will be compiled of prior annual reviews by the Chair and the Committee, peer teaching evaluations, and any other pertinent documents. This dossier will be available to the P&T Committee in each subsequent year so that annual evaluations may be made

with reference to prior reviews in order to ensure consistent feedback. The reviewed faculty member may document efforts to address deficiencies (if any) noted on prior reviews. The aim of these reviews is transparency and consistency, so that there are no surprises when the final evaluation for promotion and tenure takes place. The chair of the department tenure and promotion committee will provide a summary document that includes examples of recent successes in tenure and promotion in the Department of Physics and Astronomy.