

Starting on the Tenure Track: Some Questions to Ask Early

General questions about process:

- When exactly do reviews (pre-tenure and tenure) happen?
- What is the process for each review? (Who is involved? What does my file need to contain? When do I need to submit the file? When and how will I hear the outcome?)
- What materials should I be gathering, producing, saving in anticipation of compiling a review file? What materials will be provided by other people?
- What is the relative importance of the evaluation criteria (i.e., teaching, research/scholarship, and service) in the tenure review? Is this relation different in a pre-tenure review?
- Are there precise quantitative standards (e.g., one book, three peer-reviewed articles) for tenure? If not, what qualitative standards do the evaluation committees use?
- What sorts of pre-tenure research support (e.g., guaranteed time off from teaching, conference funding, summer stipends, grant application support) are available for junior faculty?
- Who will provide guidance and feedback along the way, and in what form? How will I know whether I am “on track” between formal reviews?

Some more context-specific questions, or questions for later in the process:

- What weight are student evaluations given in determining teaching effectiveness? What other sorts of measures of teaching effectiveness are used?
- How important are external grants in evaluating the quality of my research?
- (How) are external letters solicited for tenure, and how much do they matter?
- How are collaborative efforts (teaching or research) evaluated?
- If I have an interdisciplinary or joint appointment, how are my review committees constituted? How are my contributions to different departments weighed?
- Under what circumstances can the timeline to tenure be changed?
- Can research on teaching (SOTL) “count” as part of my scholarship?