CHAPTER 2: REAPPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (TENURE LINE)

2.1 Timeline and Checkpoints for Reappointment Activities

See chart for appointment timeline [1]

The School of Humanities and Sciences follows a 4/3 schedule for assistant professor appointments. The initial appointment is for four years with the reappointment review typically conducted during the fourth year. The reappointment is for three years. If a department wishes to follow a different schedule, the department chair must consult with, and obtain the approval of, the cluster dean before the candidate is notified of the review.

2.2. Notification to Candidate

Candidates should be notified in writing by the department chair that the reappointment review will be conducted with information about timing and the materials required from the candidate for the review. A template for such a communication is available on the H&S website.

2.3 Criteria

While untenured appointments are generally made for a first term with the clear possibility of reappointment, such action is by no means automatic. Instead, decisions on reappointment and promotion are, like decisions on initial appointment, subject to the exercise of professional and scholarly judgment and discretion by the University’s departmental faculty and academic leadership.
A recommendation for untenured reappointment or promotion must be preceded by a careful evaluation of all available information on the candidate’s demonstrated performance and achievement in research, teaching (as applicable) and/or other pertinent aspects of his or her performance since the initial appointment to the Stanford faculty so as to ensure that the candidate continues to meet expectations of excellence. Candidates may be reappointed on the basis of progress, high-level performance, and their continuing to fulfill programmatic need. At the time of reappointment, it is expected that an Assistant Professor will be on a career trajectory consistent with both Stanford standards and the standards of his or her discipline in scholarship, teaching and (if applicable) other activities.

Factors to be considered in assessing research performance or promise include (but are not limited to) the following: scholarly activity and productivity; impact, innovation and creativity; recognition in the field; ability to work effectively as part of a research team (if relevant); effective communication with colleagues, staff and students; and professionalism, institutional compliance and ethics.

Teaching is broadly defined to include: the classroom, studio, laboratory or clinical setting; advising; mentoring; program building; and curricular innovation. The teaching record should include, as appropriate, undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral instruction, of all types. Factors considered in assessing teaching performance or promise may include (but are not limited to) the following: knowledge of the material; clarity of exposition; positive style of interaction with students; availability; professionalism, institutional compliance and ethics; effective communication skills; helpfulness in learning; and ability to stimulate further education.

Service (including what might be called institutional citizenship), although relevant, is not a primary criterion for reappointment.

2.4 Forming the Evaluation Committee

The evaluation committee has the responsibility for gathering data on scholarship, teaching, and other relevant matters, such as institutional service. While evaluation committee size and structure vary among departments, normally the minimum is three members, with a senior faculty member serving as chair. With the exception of assistant professors and untenured associate professors, any member of the Academic Council may serve on a reappointment evaluation committee. In general, a faculty member who has served as the mentor or Ph.D. advisor to the candidate or one who is a collaborator of the candidate should not serve on the committee although this may sometimes be unavoidable or preferable to other alternatives. The department chair should consult with the Senior Associate Dean in such situations. Any mentoring or collaborative relationship between the candidate and a review committee member or letter writer should be clearly disclosed in the cover memos from the department and school. Once the department chair has selected the committee, he or she must consult with the cognizant dean, who retains authority to approve its membership.

2.5 Department Discussion and Confidentiality Issues

Should a faculty member within the department write a personal letter evaluating the candidate before the case is discussed or voted upon, he or she may not participate in departmental discussions regarding reappointment and must recuse himself or herself from voting.

As a standard practice, the supporting documentation should be made available to Academic Council departmental
faculty who are eligible to vote on the reappointment for their review only after the file is substantially complete, that is, after most of the referee letters have been received. It is expected that each voting faculty member in the department will carefully and objectively evaluate this material before the case is discussed or voted upon.

The evaluation committee will then present its recommendations for discussion and consideration by the department's faculty. To underscore Stanford's policy of vigorously protecting the sources of information contained in third-party evaluation, department chairs are required to read the following statement to their faculty before every discussion of an individual's appointment, reappointment or promotion:

"The entire reappointment proceedings during which specific individuals are discussed are to be held in strict confidence by all participants. The University takes extensive measures to protect the privacy of the candidate by preserving the confidentiality of the information it receives regarding the candidate. Similarly, it is Stanford's policy to protect vigorously the sources of information and evaluations used in these proceedings. The opinions expressed by the school or department faculty or by internal or external referees shall not be discussed with the candidate or with other parties. The chair of the department or his/her designee shall convey whatever information needs to be transmitted to the candidate. A breach of confidence by a participant in an appointment and promotion matter may be considered to be a serious violation of professional ethics."

2.6 Reviewing the Scholarship

Confidential letters from professional peers and students are an important part of the reappointment process. Candid assessment of scholarship and teaching, without concern for breach of confidentiality, can best be obtained if explicit assurance is given that Stanford's policy is to vigorously protect the sources of information contained in third-party evaluation. Evidence concerning scholarship and teaching is essential, and the reappointment papers must include careful documentation of both.

External referees. External referees evaluating the individual's scholarship are to be chosen with great care. Department chairs or evaluation committees are required to obtain three to five letters from distinguished scholars outside of Stanford. In selecting the referees, the committee should consult with the junior faculty member as to who is knowledgeable about the field, as well as possible scholarly conflicts. The candidate should suggest no more than two referees. Ideally, the referees should have no mentoring or direct relationship with the candidate. At most, one letter may be from the candidate's dissertation advisor or mentor.

Normally, an individual perceived by the candidate as having a strong negative personal bias toward him/her, or someone who has a clear conflict of interest should not be asked to serve as a referee. If for some reason letters from such individuals are judged likely to be useful, and are solicited and received, the existence and nature of the concerns regarding the perceived bias or conflict of interest should be clearly indicated in the evaluation committee report.

A preliminary list of external referees should be prepared by the evaluation committee, after considering the suggestions (both positive and negative) of the candidate, as well as their own knowledge of the field. Not all of the persons suggested by the candidate will necessarily be asked to write, nor will the negative suggestions of the candidate necessarily be followed; the initial preparation of the list is at the discretion of the committee. Once the referees have been selected by the department, those involved in the review process should avoid communication with the referees that relates to the review process, both before and after letters are sent out.

After the preliminary list of external referees is prepared, the department chair should present this information to the
cognizant dean together with brief biographical sketches of the proposed referees, and should identify any individuals with special ties to the candidate (e.g., dissertation advisor, collaborator, etc.). The cognizant dean may suggest and/or require that changes be made to the list in order to obtain a more appropriate evaluation of the candidate. The cognizant dean is responsible for approval of the final list.

In order to obtain the required three to five referee letters, five potential referees should generally be asked in advance by email if they are able to provide evaluative letters. If the reply is positive, the department should then follow up with more detailed information, including the candidate's curriculum vitae, research and teaching statement, and selected publications. The wording of the letter soliciting evaluation of the candidate's scholarship is of critical importance. All such letters must be expressly approved by the cognizant dean before they are sent. Referees should be given sufficient time to respond. The sample letters provided by the H&S Dean's Office should be followed closely.

Phone calls should not be made to external referees prior to sending them letters. Departments are to maintain a written record of all follow-up done with referees. If, after receiving no response from the referee, a phone call is made to solicit a letter, then a written log of conversation is to be kept and included in the file.

If a referee chooses not to write, the communication explaining this decision (e.g., letter, e-mail message or phone conversation summary) is to be included in the file. If it becomes necessary to supplement the original referee list, the cognizant dean must approve the addition of any new names.

Once a letter of evaluation is received, it is inappropriate for the department to ask a referee for an interpretation or clarification of his or her comments. Any exception must be approved in advance by the cognizant dean.

Comparisons. Comparisons of the candidate's work with that of other scholars are not necessary at the time of reappointment.

Internal referees. In addition to external referees, faculty members from outside of the department, but internal to Stanford, may be asked to provide an evaluation of the candidate's scholarship and/or teaching. The number of such letters should normally not be more than two; these are in addition to the required number of external referee letters. The file should contain brief biographical sketches of the internal referees, along with a short explanation about why the person is being asked to write. The cognizant dean has the responsibility for determination and approval of the final list. A sample letter to internal referees is provided by the H&S Dean's office.

Departmental evaluation. The chair and/or members of the reappointment committee must provide a report describing the candidate's current work, along with an evaluation of its quality. In cases where there has not been considerable published work beyond the dissertation, a particular effort should be made to evaluate the candidate's unpublished work in progress. The author(s) of this report must be identified.

Candidate statement. The candidate should include a statement describing the present and future course of his or her research and teaching. The candidate should consult with his or her chair regarding the content and length of the statement, which ordinarily should not exceed three pages. Candidates who submit longer statements should be asked to revise the statements to meet the three-page limit. The evaluation committee should comment on these planned activities and the potential for professional growth. The candidate's statement should also be included in the materials sent to all external referees.
2.7 Reviewing the Teaching

Candidates for reappointment are expected to continue to meet expectations of excellence in teaching. It is the responsibility of the department and the candidate to plan the course teaching assignments of an assistant professor so that he or she will have the opportunity to gain experience and develop skills in the various types of coursework that are relevant to the educational mission of the department and appropriate for the candidate (e.g., large and small classes; undergraduate and graduate courses; lectures, seminars, laboratory classes, etc.).

Evidence gathered for the reappointment papers should include:

- a summary of the teaching commitments since the beginning of the candidate’s Stanford appointment (or since the last multi-year reappointment) with course titles, numbers, units, and enrollments;
- course evaluation summaries;
- description of any pedagogical innovations or course development activities in which the candidate has participated;
- confidential letters from students (both undergraduate and graduate) enrolled in the assistant professor’s courses as well as letters from teaching assistants, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows for whom the candidate is an advisor or mentor;
- evaluation by senior faculty who have visited the candidate’s classroom or who have evaluated the candidate’s course materials (optional).

Letters from students are a critical component of the reappointment process. The number of letters and selection of students are directly related to the teaching and advising responsibilities of the faculty candidate. Following are guidelines for obtaining student letters.

- Include letters from all current and former direct graduate and/or postdoctoral advisees of candidate;
- If appropriate to the candidate’s role, the file must include 4-6 letters from undergraduate students; more may be included if that is the department’s practice. This number may include undergraduate student advisees, students in classes taught by the candidate, or a combination of the two groups. The goal is to obtain input from a cross-section of undergraduates taught or advised by the candidate. A department may establish its own process for selecting students; such a process should be used for all reappointment reviews and should be described briefly in the file. Following are general guidelines for selecting undergraduate students:
  - Advisees: Letters from undergraduate student advisees may be solicited from all students on a list assembled by the department or provided by the candidate, or from a random selection of students on the list.
  - Students in Classes: Depending on the size of classes taught, the department may ask all students in the candidate’s classes to provide a letter, or may solicit letters in a random manner from class lists (for example, selection of every tenth student, every twentieth student, etc.).
- Two follow-up requests should be made to non-respondents.
- Email may be used.
- The department should document the process in the final file. Tallies of the number of letters requested and received are to be included, along with copy of sample solicitation letter and follow-up request letters.
- Unsolicited letters may not be included in the file.

The evaluation committee should provide an analysis of the qualitative data as well as commentary on the content of the student letters. Negative comments should be addressed.
2.8 Reappointment Options

If the department decides to recommend an assistant professor for reappointment, there are several options depending on the findings of the review:

a. An assistant professor whose performance is judged to meet the standard at Stanford is normally reappointed to a second term as assistant professor for three years.

b. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to promote an assistant professor to the rank of untenured associate professor. This exceptional type of reappointment may be used as a means of retaining faculty who are especially promising though they may not yet have acquired the record necessary for consideration for tenure. The candidate’s performance, including scholarly work and teaching, should be sufficiently strong to justify untenured promotion. Promotion to the rank of untenured associate professor implies no commitment or prejudgment with respect to the outcome of any future tenure review. Options for such appointments are limited by the tenure clock because, absent extenuating circumstances such as leaves without salary, no person may be appointed in an untenured professorial rank at Stanford University for a total of more than seven years. In addition, the total length of untenured service at Stanford University at the tenure line ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor (or at more than one of such ranks) may not exceed ten years, regardless of the number of leaves without salary, new parent extensions, other extensions, or time spent in either an administrative appointment or on a specific project. The department chair must consult with the cognizant dean regarding this option.

c. The department or the deans may decide not to recommend an assistant professor for reappointment. If an assistant professor receives a negative review and decision on reappointment, then the individual may be entitled to a terminal one-year, non-tenure accruing appointment (see Chapter 2 of the Stanford University Faculty Handbook).

2.9 Voting

Individual departments have the authority to determine the eligibility of Academic Council members to vote on reappointments. Emeritus professors (whether or not recalled to active duty) may not vote on the reappointment of assistant professors. Students may neither participate in departmental deliberations nor vote.

Departments must have a clear and consistent voting policy. Any modification of the policy must be discussed with the cognizant dean. Eligible department members are expected to vote. Faculty not on leave should make every effort to attend the department meeting. They are expected to read all of the written materials related to the recommendation and to vote. Although faculty on leave are not expected to participate in the appointment review process, the department chair and cognizant dean may request that a person on leave participate in the process by reviewing all materials and voting. In such cases, faculty away from campus should ensure that their votes are received by the chair in advance of departmental balloting. Some faculty must recuse themselves from participating and voting, including spouses, domestic partners, those who have written a letter on behalf of the candidate prior to departmental discussion and voting, and others who have conferred with the cognizant dean and reached an agreement with him or her regarding recusal prior to the departmental vote.

School policy allows for either secret or open ballots on reappointments. Departments should adopt one system and apply it consistently in all cases. The practice of conducting a "straw vote" which, if positive, is followed by a final "unanimous vote" is prohibited. The actual yeas, nays, abstentions, and non-votes must be recorded and reported in all votes on faculty appointments. Any faculty member may write a letter explaining his or her vote in the file.
faculty member who votes negatively or abstains is encouraged to include a written explanation for the file submitted by the department.

Split votes. In cases where the vote is split, the department chair retains the authority to decide whether or not to forward a file to the Dean's Office. Any member of the departmental professoriate has the right to appeal the decision of the department or of the chair. The appeal process should begin at the level of cognizant dean.

Abstenstions. If there are any abstentions, the chair should summarize the reasons for them, if practicable.

Dissenting votes. If there are dissenting votes, the chair should summarize the reasons for them, if practicable. Dissenting voters are strongly encouraged to write a letter for the file.

Communications to the Dean regarding the case. Faculty members who vote may communicate directly with the Dean's Office about their vote, and their written statements will be added to the papers that are considered by reviewing bodies. In such instances, however, the faculty member must provide a copy of his or her letter to the department chair, who will have the option of forwarding a written response that will also be added to the file. Both the faculty member's letter and the department chair's response must be held in strictest confidence and not be shared with other members of the department's faculty.

In extraordinary situations, however, faculty members, graduate students and postdocs may communicate in writing to the Dean's Office with the assurance that their communication will be held confidential from other members of the department, including the chair. Letters of this type may be added to the papers that are considered by reviewing bodies if, in the opinion of the cognizant dean, (1) the letter discusses information or views that are relevant to the review of the appointment or promotion; (2) the letter clearly states the reason why the writer desires to communicate confidentially; and (3) the reason for confidentiality is a compelling one.

If such a letter is included in the file, the file should note that the letter is confidential and has not been reviewed by the department chair. Where appropriate, the cognizant dean may gather any additional information that he or she believes is helpful to verify the accuracy of any problematic statements in the letter and record his or her findings in the file.

2.10 Negative Decisions at the Department Level

If a candidate for reappointment is turned down at the department level, the chair should first discuss the outcome with the cognizant dean. Shortly after this discussion, the chair should provide the cognizant dean with a copy of the file, a detailed memo outlining the reasons for the reappointment denial, along with a draft letter to the candidate that notifies the candidate of the decision. Under normal circumstances, the candidate should be informed within one week from the time of the decision. Department faculty should be reminded of the importance of ensuring confidentiality of all matters related to the decision.

2.11 Submission of the Reappointment Papers

The chair of the evaluation committee is responsible for preparing the documentation necessary to complete the file. The reappointment papers should be assembled in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Stanford University Faculty Appointment Form B2: Academic Council Faculty: Reappointment or Promotion to an Untenured Rank for a Term of Years (Appendix B of the Stanford University Faculty Handbook). The department administrator (or person responsible for faculty affairs within the department) will have the required forms and can assist the faculty in
assembling the file.

The department chair is responsible for writing the cover letter for the file. While acting as a letter of transmittal, the letter should include the pertinent information found during the course of the candidate’s reappointment and should state the effective date of the reappointment, which is normally September 1 of the following academic year. The department chair should not simply summarize letters or excerpt text from letters. Instead the chair’s letter should identify and evaluate any criticisms raised in referee letters or teaching evaluations, summarize the candidate’s placement with regard to the comparison set (if applicable) and provide any relevant information not included in referee or student letters.

2.12 The Review Process

When the file has been completed, the department administrator should send the file to the Faculty Affairs Officer in the Dean's Office for review. After reviewing the materials to ensure adherence to policy and procedure, the Faculty Affairs Officer will return the file to the department for any revisions before copying. The department administrator will then send the original file plus the necessary number of copies to the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office, in its discretion, may solicit additional information regarding the file.

The following steps occur after the file leaves the department:
- H&S Faculty Affairs Office (review and forward to Cognizant Dean)
- Cognizant Dean (review and approve for H&S Dean’s consideration)
- H&S Dean (final approval at the School level)
- President (report to Board of Trustees)

2.13 Negative Decisions at the School Level

If the decision is negative at the School level, the Dean must inform the department chair of that decision and the reasons for it. Under normal circumstances, the candidate should be informed within one week from the time of the decision. Reconsideration of a negative decision by the Dean will be considered only if the department presents convincing evidence of new and material information that could not have been made available in the original evaluation. Reconsiderations are rare and may be avoided by consultation between the chair and the cognizant dean at appropriate intervals in the reappointment process. If the faculty member is denied reappointment during any stage of the review, he or she may obtain information on the relevant University policies by consulting the Stanford University Faculty Handbook.

2.14 Feedback from the Reappointment Process

One of the purposes of the reappointment review is to provide constructive suggestions for the junior faculty member’s career development. When the department has completed the reappointment review, the chair should draft a counseling letter that focuses on the faculty member’s development as a scholar, teacher, and colleague. The counseling letter should not be shared with the candidate until the completion of the reappointment process (approval by the President of the University). Counseling letters should not explicitly address the candidate’s prospects for tenure. Appropriate areas to discuss may include:
- scholarship quality to date;
- general expectations of the discipline(s) with respect to quantity, forum, or scientific venue of publications usually found in tenure cases;
- suggestions for the research program that might be helpful to the assistant professor;
• teaching quality, quantity, type to date;
• special efforts in teaching (new courses, courses for interdepartmental programs, curricular innovations, etc.);
• appropriate amount of service during assistant professor years and acknowledgment of special service efforts;
• any institutional citizenship issues;
• criteria for promotion in the University Tenure Line.

The draft of the counseling letter should be submitted as part of the reappointment file. After the file has been reviewed by the Dean, Provost and Advisory Board, the cognizant dean will discuss the counseling letter with the department chair and incorporate feedback, if any, gained from these other levels of review. A fuller perspective can thereby be provided to the assistant professor about his or her performance. In particular, reappointment cases that appear weak to the Dean, the Provost, or the Advisory Board can be discussed at length so that the faculty member can make appropriate attempts to strengthen his or her profile as a scholar and teacher, or to begin planning for employment elsewhere.

When the final draft of the counseling letter has been approved by the cognizant dean and after the completion of the reappointment process, the department chair will have a counseling session with the candidate and give him/her the letter. Department chairs are encouraged to include the chair and/or members of the evaluation committee, as well as the faculty member's mentor, in this counseling session. [NOTE: Every junior professor should have an annual counseling session with the department chair or his or her designee from the senior faculty. This is a joint responsibility. In other words, it is the responsibility of the department chair to confer annually with the assistant professor, and it is the responsibility of the assistant professor to follow up each year with the department chair to arrange for a conference.]

Links