

Supporting Associate Professors  
Brandeis [Tenured Promotion Committee](#)  
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The committee met March 5, 2025, to review what is known about current dissatisfaction and unease about the pathways to Full, and what can be done. After reviewing data and hearing from Deans Shoulson and Christensen, we ended up with three sorts of recommendations we hope will make the pathway from Associate to Full less stressful and ideally swifter. One set involve *communication*, and second set involve *augmenting support* so Associates can do more promotion-worthy scholarship/creative work and teaching; a third set involve possible *modifications* to the Handbook or FRR criteria for promotion.

Background and Deliberations

The recent well-attended meeting of Associate Professors interested in promotion suggests—and conversations with our Associate colleagues confirms—the following issues.

1. Associates are lingering in rank and there is some worry that either inequality or a systemic failure to promote, or a failure to make clear the criteria for promotion is holding them back.
2. Statistics prepared by the Dean's office do not provide evidence of any discrepancy at Brandeis in "time in rank" by gender or by race. However, a disparity exists at Brandeis in promotion-rate between divisions. There is some suggestion (no hard data) that this sort of discipline-specific discrepancy may be true elsewhere as well. We concluded there was not enough information to target that discrepancy as an issue. The problems facing promotion seemed generalizable across divisions. If better national data comes to light that suggests Brandeis has a particularly alarming version of this disciplinary/divisional gap (e.g our Sciences faculty average 6.9 years as Associates, while Social Sciences average 13.1) then this topic could be reopened.

3. Associates across the university are unsure about what is required, how to prepare, and when to go up. **Communication:** The Standards do not seem to be widely read – nor have they been translated for many Associates into an actionable field-specific shape. It should be a priority to keep Associates informed and enabled to move forward through the process at rate commensurate with their scholarly and pedagogical achievements (it should for example be made clear that “creativity in design” and “diligence in execution” are important expectations for teaching). Of course there are field-specific aspects of what it will take to get promoted; but the university could do a better job communicating what promotion expectations are. (Especially in the case of small departments that have few or no tenured Full professors, mentors from outside the Associate’s home department have proved to be a valuable resource in the past). The university can also support mentoring and guidance within academic units (departments and programs) . **Support:** Additional resources for Associates to strengthen their scholarship and their teaching are also necessary. There exists some fear (especially within Creative Arts ) that promotion is undesirable since it will increase one’s service burden. Creative work can require time commitment and travel that is not always at faculty discretion to schedule and can be at odds with service responsibilities, especially leadership positions. The implementation of collaborative leadership models and alternate committee members can make the prospect of enhanced service responsibilities less daunting. **Modification of Standards:** Some TPC members felt that the standards themselves are deficient in specifying scholarly/creative criteria for promotion.

### Recommendations

We recognize that some Associates may feel tenure is enough, and that having a fulfilling career does not necessitate a further promotion to Full. For those who do wish to seek Full, however, we list below two sorts of things ought to be done: Communication and Support. Thirdly, the university might consider modification of the standards to clarify expectations for scholarly and creative work.

#### **#1 Communication:**

University level: We recommend a mentorship program be introduced and made available (though not mandated) for every Associate during their first year in rank. Ideally there will be an annual meeting for those Associates to air promotion-related topics and also to encourage Associates to get to know one another and their projects (horizontal encouragement and collaboration is also vital, and might be encouraged by judicious use of grants for e.g. writing groups, or weekend retreats). The university should also make sure the Promotion Standards reach every Associate and are explained by Chair/Full Profs in their relevant unit. The Dean should invite the TPC to address chairs, and encourage Chairs

to invite TPC to speak to their Full Profs about what can be done to mentor and support Associates within their academic unit.

Department Level: TPC and the administration should work to spread the word about models that have proved effective in particular units already. Biology and Economics each have their own plan in place; those might be shared so that field-specific versions of the “path to promotion” can be circulated. Discussion within departments/programs (or other relevant units, especially in cases where a department/program is too small for a productive discussion) optimally ought to include annual discussion among Full Professors about what is needed and how the Associate can get there; followed by a briefing from chair–and/or an internal mentor appointed by chair when warranted or useful.

## **#2: Support**

To support promotion-crucial scholarly projects.

1. For social science and Humanities and some Creative Arts Associates, we recommend the model of stipended MS workshops (cf Duke MS Review process for Associate Profs) the Admin commits to funding up to 8 per year (a mechanism for organizing those workshops would follow the one employed for Assistant profs.) In cases where such a model does not apply (eg. among some Creative Arts faculty) flexible teaching schedules and targeted time-flexible grants for collaborative artistic work might prove helpful. In the Sciences, shielding Associates from extensive service (see note below) may be the most feasible support, given that research is funded largely by external grants. To support teaching excellence we recommend targeted Associate CTL grants. We also note that further research and discussion is needed on what other sorts of useful support might be.

To support Service

3. One significant university/department practice that may impede research productivity after Assistants are promoted to Associates is the tendency for Associates to be assigned more time-consuming teaching and service roles. Remedies that decrease service load are hard to envision, but would be appropriate in departments where there are not enough faculty to cover essential service roles. Service is not weighed for promotion to Full in the way teaching and scholarship are (“Promotion to full professor requires excellence in research/scholarship or creative work, and in teaching. Service is also an important factor.”) We agree with this weighting, since it allows professors to focus on pursuing the work for which they are hired and valued by colleagues and students.

Therefore, service, when required by the university, ought to be compensated in other ways. There should be a robust discussion of ways to increase and to publicize (since information vacuums are also a kind of inequity) the compensation offered for various service roles. Moreover, adequate staffing to support complex service tasks is essential, as is maintaining faculty critical mass to cover required service roles.

### #3: Modifications to the Standards

The TPC realizes this is not our decision to make alone. Still, certain themes emerged that will warrant further discussion if the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee is to issue revised standards. The Standards (reproduced below) may need revision to strengthen emphasis on pedagogical innovation (e.g. might training grants in the sciences be construed as a proof of excellence in teaching?) and to clarify scholarly quantity and reputation requirements. We believe that the standards for scholarship/research/creative work that warrants promotion might be rewritten as follows: "significant additional scholarly or creative work since tenure comparable in amount and character to that which would earn promotion to the position of tenured associate professor in the candidate's discipline." There was also interest in exploring changing definitions of "non-traditional" or public-facing work, although this also raises major issues of field-specificity, since outside letter writers will also determine what counts as scholarly accomplishment. There was also clear agreement that the role of service as a factor in promotion should not be increased.

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Appendix 1.  
STANDARDS FOR PROMOTION TO FULL PROFESSOR  
(with Tenure)

*Promotion to full professor requires excellence in research/scholarship or creative work, and in teaching. Service is also an important factor. In the professional schools, contributions to the candidate's field of professional practice are also an important factor.*

*Promotion requires that the candidate has demonstrated distinction and influence in the scholarship or creative work of the discipline, and achieved a level of national and international recognition commensurate with the rank of Professor in the candidate's field. Since the granting of tenure, the candidate should have published significant scholarly work, or exhibited significant creative work, of an amount and character consistent with promotion to full professor in the candidate's discipline.*

*A candidate's post-tenure teaching must meet standards that are at least as high as those required for appointment as Associate Professor with tenure at Brandeis. Teaching performance is evaluated based on numerical and qualitative student course evaluations, creativity in the design and diligence in the execution of courses, and success as a mentor and advisor to undergraduates and, where relevant, graduate students and postdocs.*

*Promotion is also contingent upon reasonable availability for and responsible execution of appropriate service within the Department and for the University.*

*Length of time in rank is not a factor for consideration for promotion.*

*Approved by the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities in July 2005*