

Appendix III
Department of History, University of Houston
Merit Guidelines

Purpose: The History Department has an on-going commitment to the objective, careful, and thorough assessment it undertakes annually as part of the merit system. Department faculty members annually elect a committee of three faculty members, one from each rank, with rules ensuring a fair rotation in the assignment of this critical responsibility. No faculty member shall serve on the Merit Committee more than twice in five years. To provide continuity, the tenured faculty member who receives the highest number of votes will serve for two years.* Each member of the democratically elected and representative Merit Committee reads all the faculty activity reports, supplemented by c.v.'s, teaching evaluations, copies of recent publications, and other materials to assist the merit committee, as described below. The committee then assembles and deliberates carefully before assigning each member of the faculty an overall merit rating in keeping with the department's guidelines. The department's approach avoids the appearance and reality of vesting arbitrary power over raises and other rewards in a single individual.

*Note: A fourth member of the department, who must be tenured, replaces the assistant professor for the purpose of the annual post-tenure review. This fourth colleague is elected on the same ballot as the Merit Committee.

Procedures: The History Department considers the Merit Committee's overall merit rating a strong recommendation to the Chair, more than merely advisory. After deliberating as described below, the Merit Committee will submit its overall merit ratings directly to individual faculty members, along with a deadline for written appeals to the Merit Committee, and will notify the department by email that evaluations have been distributed. Any faculty member not satisfied with his/her overall merit rating must submit a written appeal and also may request a meeting with the Merit Committee. After further deliberation in response to appeals, the Merit Committee will make its final recommendations and send its merit reports for all faculty to the Chair.

In cases where the Chair disagrees with the Merit Committee's overall merit ratings, the Chair will meet with the Merit Committee to attempt to come to agreement. In cases of continued disagreement, the Executive Committee (of which the Chair is a member) will determine the final overall merit rating for the faculty member in question.

Evaluation of Merit Committee and Department Chair: The Chair will select a subcommittee of three members of the standing Executive Committee (one from each rank) to undertake the evaluation of members of the Merit Committee. The Chair and the subcommittee will make every effort to ensure thorough and consistent evaluation of Merit Committee members.

The Merit Committee will evaluate the Department Chair as a member of the faculty, modifying the departmental guidelines to allow due consideration for the emphasis Chairs must place on their administrative duties.

Operation of the Merit Committee: Each committee will be chaired by the most senior member of the committee. The committee chair will provide each member with the current merit guidelines (which include a standard evaluation form as Addendum 1), the prior year's merit reports, annual reports by preceding merit committees (see below), a summary of teaching evaluation data for all faculty, and departmental salary information for consideration in equity requests. Every member of the committee shall review the merit files of every member of the department, using the standard evaluation form to highlight the important aspects of research, teaching, and service.

The committee will meet to discuss the Faculty Activity Reports and will arrive at an overall merit rating for each person. Each member of the faculty will be provided with a written evaluation summarizing the committee's findings and its final overall merit rating. The chair of the committee will divide up the responsibility of writing the evaluations among committee members. Prior to distribution, committee members will submit the written evaluations to the committee chair who will review them for stylistic consistency before submitting them to the individual faculty members.

At the end of the process, the Merit Committee will write a report summarizing the committee's work, explaining any difficult decisions, and noting any concerns or other information that might be useful for subsequent Merit Committees. These reports will be kept on file and passed along each year to incoming Merit Committees. The purpose is to improve consistency and also to identify issues that may require adjustment of the merit guidelines.

Faculty members shall be responsible for providing the Merit Committee with copies of any publications, a Statement on Research to supplement the Faculty Activity Reporting Form (see Addendum 2 below), and any supporting materials that may assist the committee in its deliberations. Any member of the faculty failing to submit a faculty activity form after the department has made a reasonable effort to solicit the form shall be assigned an overall merit rating of 1.

Merit Category Guidelines: Overall Merit Rating (5 point scale)*

The department recognizes and rewards faculty excellence in research, teaching, and service through the overall merit rating. Because the University of Houston is a research university, and because of the high priority the department places on research, the overall merit rating (5 point scale) shall be equal to the research rating (5 point scale). However, in cases of exemplary teaching or service, the overall merit rating may be raised above the research rating; likewise, in cases of derelict teaching or service, the overall merit rating may be lowered below the research rating. The following serve as guidelines for raising or lowering the overall merit rating relative to the research rating:

+1 A faculty member's overall merit rating shall be increased to 1 level above the research rating in cases where the faculty member earns a teaching rating of "exceeds expectations" two years in a row or earns a service rating of "exceeds expectations" two years in a row. The maximum possible rating is a 5 (if a faculty member earning this boost already had a research

rating of 5, the rating would remain the same). Faculty members with a research rating of 3+ earning this boost would be rated a 4.

-1 A faculty member's overall merit rating shall be decreased to 1 level below the research rating in cases where the faculty member earns a teaching rating of "fails to meet expectations" two years in a row or earns a service rating of "fails to meet expectations" for that merit year. The lowest possible rating is a 1 (if a faculty member earning this reduction already had a research rating of 1, the rating would remain the same). Faculty members with a research rating of 3+ earning for this reduction would be rated a 2.

*Merit Category Guidelines: Research (5 point scale) **

5 Rating in this category is based on the publication of a book-length manuscript of original scholarship, or a major professional award for a book. Manuscripts "in press" (meaning verifiably in production, not simply under contract) also qualify for this category. As such, a book ultimately receives two ratings of 5 for research: the first in the year the book goes into production and the second in the year the book is published (should the book go into production and be published in the same calendar year then the faculty member will receive a 5 for two years in a row). A third 5 may be awarded for books that receive a major award. More than one achievement that each rates a 4 may also qualify for a 5.

4 Rating in this category is based on the publication of a refereed article, a book chapter of original scholarship, a peer-reviewed textbook published by a recognized academic or commercial press, lead editorship of an edited volume, a major grant, fellowship, or contract beneficial to the faculty member's individual research and/or the graduate program, a regional professional award, an article award, or a university research or teaching award.**

3+ Rating in this category is based on documentation of outstanding research activity, such as having the manuscript of a monograph that has been sent by the press to outside readers, extensive archival research trips, multiple conference presentations, invited talks, or a combination of such activities. A 3+ also may recognize scholarly products other than those recognized by a "4" or "5" rating.**

3 Rating in this category is based on documentation of on-going research activity, including progress on a book, article(s), book chapter(s), and/or completion of encyclopedia entries and book reviews.

2 Rating in this category is based on negligible evidence of research-related professional activity.

1 Rating in this category presumes no progress in research.

*Note: The description of each research rating category is meant to guide the deliberations of the Merit Committee and the department chair in determining the research rating for each faculty member. However, the guidelines do not constitute absolute or rigid standards without

qualification. To provide consistency over time, qualifications or other criteria devised by a Merit Committee in response to particular circumstances should be set out in the written report for the next year's Committee.

**Note: The following scholarly products may be considered for a 3+ or 4: revised editions of monographs, foreign language translations of previously published work, anthologies of previously published articles, and co-authored articles. In each case the faculty member is responsible for providing materials to assist the Merit Committee in evaluating the significance of the work in question.

***Note: For digital humanities projects and public history projects see Addendum 4.

Merit Category Guidelines: Teaching and Service (3 category scales)

The History Department will rate teaching and service according to the following categories:

- A) Exceeds Expectations
- B) Meets Expectations
- C) Fails to Meet Expectations

In both Teaching and Service, expectations increase with academic rank.

TEACHING

- A. A faculty member might be considered to have exceeded expectations if he or she:
 - 1. Receives a college, university, or other significant teaching award, or
 - 2. In any given year provides *extensive meritorious* service to the department's teaching mission by way of new course/curriculum development, notable service teaching (e.g., teaching more than one large section), or exceptional advising and/or service on examination/thesis/dissertation committees.
- B. To meet the department's expectations in teaching, a faculty member must demonstrate continuing dedication to the teaching mission of the department by fulfilling such responsibilities as:
 - 1. Holding regular office hours and teaching his/her assigned courses with evaluations that are at or near departmental means;
 - 2. Periodic course development, curriculum development, service teaching, advising, and service on examination/thesis/dissertation committees.
- C. This category includes any faculty member who fails to hold regular offices hours, regularly misses scheduled classes, or whose course evaluations are deemed below average by the Merit Committee.

SERVICE

- A. To exceed expectations in service, faculty must perform well above average in any given year providing documented extensive meritorious service well beyond the standard expectations outlined in B below. This might include:

1. Departmental service as Director of Graduate Studies, Director of Undergraduate Studies, or Director of Technology and Library Services
2. Departmental service on more than one committee (includes standing committees and search committees, but not ad hoc committees).
3. Extensive college or university service in addition to normal departmental service
4. Extensive service to the profession or to the community in addition to normal departmental service

B. To meet the department's expectations in service, a faculty member not on leave or holding an administrative position in the college/university must demonstrate continuing commitment to the service mission of the department, college, and university through attendance of departmental meetings and active involvement in the work of one assigned departmental standing committee as well as any college or university committees. Service at the college and university levels as well as service to the profession and to the community do not replace departmental service in at least one assigned standing committee.

C. This category includes any faculty member who fails to meet the expectations listed under B above. Service on standing committees is mandatory for those duly elected (Executive, Merit, Nominations) or for those appointed by the chairperson and approved by the Executive Committee (Graduate, Undergraduate, Technology and Library, Mentoring, and search committees). A faculty member who refuses to serve or who fails to attend meetings of a standing committee for reasons other than illness (reported to payroll), medical or personal emergency granted by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, or faculty development leave, shall receive "fails to meet expectations" on their service merit rating.

Addendum One: Form for the Use of Merit Committee

NAME:

OVERALL MERIT RATING

5 4 3+ 3 2 1

Rationale for raising or lowering relative to research rating:

RESEARCH:

Publications:

Work in progress (compare with previous year's Faculty Activity Report and Statement of Research):

Conferences/Lectures:

Other:

5 4 3+ 3 2 1

TEACHING:

Courses:

Evaluations:

Graduate Committees:

Other:

Exceeds, meets, or fails to meet expectations

SERVICE:

UH Committees (identify level):

Professional:

Community:

Other:

Exceeds, meets, or fails to meet expectations

NOTES AND/OR QUESTIONS:

Addendum Two:

Statement on Research for use of the Merit Committee (to be distributed to the faculty along with the College's Faculty Activity Report Form)

Please provide a narrative outlining your current research project(s) and the work accomplished during the calendar year under consideration. You may include information about trips to archives, grants applied for or received in support of research, presentations of research, the status of drafts of chapters and articles, contact with journal and book publishers, or explanations of the significance of particular journals or outside recognitions.

Faculty members must supply materials supporting this research narrative to the Merit Committee (as always, they must provide copies of any publications). Particularly in the case of non-traditional scholarly formats, please provide documentation (by outside evaluators if possible) of the significance of the contributions to the advancement or transformation of historical knowledge.

Addendum Three:
Guidelines for Distribution of the Raise Pool

The Executive Committee believes that the system for distributing merit money as voted on by the faculty on November 12, 2003 is basically sound but that some additional guidelines are needed, particularly in the areas of book and inequity monies.

The committee recommends that book money be given at the time of publication. Article awards can earn a second 4 but not book money, or a 5.

The committee also recommends that the department award inequity money in those years when the raise pool is 3% or higher. In years where the raise pool is less than 3%, all money would go towards merit and book money.

Annual raise notifications (typically distributed by the Chair during the summer) shall be accompanied by a statement of the total raise pool and the dollar amounts for each overall merit rating category, and equity raises should be identified separately as such.

To regularize department practice for dealing with years when there is not a raise pool to reward high performing faculty, the Merit Committee will adhere to the following guidelines:

Book Money: faculty who publish a book during a year when there was not a merit pool will be awarded book money by the subsequent year's Merit Committee.

4s and 5s for Research: if the previous year lacked a merit pool, the Merit Committee will provide two ratings in the merit reports. The committee will calculate a merit score for the current calendar year in question and an "overall merit rating" that carries the higher of the two ratings forward into the present year. For example, let us say that last year Professor X was awarded a 4 for a peer reviewed article in a year without a raise pool and a 3 for ongoing work during the current year. Professor X would be rated a 3 for the current year, but a 4 for "overall merit rating." In cases where faculty are awarded 5s for books either "in press" or "in print" the Merit Committee should make every effort to guarantee that a 5 is awarded for each of the two stages in the publishing process recognized in the merit guidelines.

These guidelines only deal with a one-year lapse in merit monies. In the unfortunate case of multiple years without merit pools, the Merit Committee should propose a solution that eventually distributes the next available merit pool equitably.

Addendum Four

Merit Guidelines for Digital Humanities and Public History

Recognizing that new forms of conducting and presenting historical scholarship need to be evaluated rigorously and fairly, the department employs procedures that reflect recent discipline-wide discussions on “best practices” for assessing Digital Humanities (DH) and Public History (PH) scholarship, which often turns on collaboration with teams both within and outside of our university.

Grants: Grant writing for digital humanities and public history has become increasingly important to historians and history departments that face steep funding challenges and should be rewarded. Writing successful large external grants (defined here as \$25,000 or more for single PI grants and \$50,000 or more for collaborative grants) is an extremely time consuming prospect given the highly and increasingly competitive nature of grants.

DH and PH Projects: The Merit Committee will consider DH and PH projects for 3+, 4, or 5 rating. A 5 represents a major DH or PH project and should demonstrate a combination of most of the following:

- Peer review print and/or digital publications resulting from the DH or PH project.
- Peer review of DH and/or PH projects.
- An excellent record of grant funding for the project.
- The establishment of important collaboration with other DH or PH projects or groups at other institutions or within this institution.
- Technical innovation and/or sophisticated and highly professional presentation.
- Use of DH or PH tools and methods to address scholarly questions not approachable with other methodologies.
- Long-term viability as a DH or PH resource.

DH or PH projects that embody some of the aspects listed above can be awarded a 3+ or 4 at the discretion of the Merit Committee. It is the responsibility of the faculty involved in a given project to provide evidence of the scholarly merit of the DH or PH project in question. Given that many DH and PH projects are ongoing, the faculty involved can only present a project for Merit Review once, unless a compelling case is made that subsequent revisions and, especially, additions are sufficient for additional merit consideration. Given the limited nature of our raise pools and the incredible diversity of potential DH and PH projects, it is incumbent on the Merit Committee to maintain a high-bar for evaluating such faculty work while also respecting the conventions of each field. That bar should be no higher or no lower than for other forms of scholarship.

Addendum Five
Post-Tenure Review

Any faculty member who meets expectations in teaching and receives a rating of three or higher in overall performance is automatically considered to have passed the post-tenure review process.

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Amended Feb. 16, 2015
Amended May 8, 2015