

Expectations for Successful Candidates for Tenure in Computer Science¹

The CAS guidelines for mid-tenure review specify that the mid-tenure report should include a brief review of the expectations our department has for successful candidates for tenure. These expectations should also be made available to potential candidates during a hiring season. The Computer Science Department's expectations are consonant with the CAS expectations for faculty.²

In terms of research, successful candidates for tenure are expected to contribute significant new knowledge and expertise to their disciplines and to play leading roles in the professional life of their disciplines. National distinction in the faculty member's academic field is expected. The record of publication in peer-reviewed venues is an important indicator of the quality of a faculty member's research, although this record must be judged in the context of other evidence of impact such as citations and expert evaluations of the long-term significance of the research. Unlike many other fields, in Computer Science it is understood that publication in top-tier conferences can be the means for dissemination of research results with maximum intellectual impact. Quantity of publications is not by itself a measure of scholarly significance but is important to the degree that significance and impact are often built by sustained productivity.

Activities that do not substitute for publication but are significant indicators of scholarly impact include professional recognition through editorial, advisory, and leadership positions; invitations to speak at other institutions; speaking at, chairing, and organizing national or international conferences and symposia; honors and awards; and external funding for research. While participation in collaborative research grants is encouraged, it is also expected that successful candidates for tenure will lead one or more federally funded research projects, in the role of PI.

It is easier to evaluate a faculty member's contribution to individual as distinct from collaborative research, but collaborative research can bring wider benefits and is encouraged. Where research is collaborative, scholarly credit will be assessed in proportion to the contribution made by the individual collaborators. Junior faculty members are expected to achieve scholarly independence from their doctoral and postdoctoral mentors and from the senior members of their research teams; and in tenure review, publications based on dissertations or postdoctoral work should be significantly advanced beyond earlier work.

Major research software, databases, and other technological or online resources may also be considered as contributions to the research field, particularly if these resources are deemed as such by external evaluators and are made available to the faculty member's research community as part of publications in leading peer-reviewed conferences or journals.

¹ Initial version was developed in July 2015. Last edited in January 2022.

² <https://www.bu.edu/cas/faculty-staff/faculty-staff-handbook/faculty-personnel-matters/tenure-track-and-tenured-faculty-expectations/>

In terms of their teaching program, successful candidates for tenure are expected to be accomplished teachers and mentors of undergraduate and graduate students. Engagement in mentoring and research training of doctoral students in the role of first reader is expected and these students' success in research is one key indicator of the quality of the faculty member's mentoring. Due to the time needed to establish a research group, and given the fact that the median time to complete PhD degrees is 6 to 7 years, it would be unusual for a faculty member to have doctoral students complete their PhDs prior to application for tenure; however, it is expected that some of the faculty member's more senior students will be clearly advancing, publishing and presenting papers, and on-track to defend their thesis research.

In terms of service, successful candidates for tenure are expected to contribute as citizens of the Department, College and University – but at a level that is less than that expected of faculty after tenure and promotion. More important is the service in the faculty member's research community, especially as it promotes the visibility and research profile of the faculty member and his or her research program at BU, as already noted.