

Complete Policy Title:  
**Policy for Referees – Tenure-Stream  
Faculty**

Policy Number (if applicable):  
**SPS B7**

Approved by:  
**Senate  
Board of Governors**

Date of Most Recent Approval:  
**December 14, 2011  
December 15, 2011**

Date of Original Approval(s):  
**April 25, 1995**

Supersedes/Amends Policy dated:  
**April 22, 2002 (SPS 13)**

Responsible Executive:  
**Provost and Vice-President (Academic)**

Enquiries:  
[University Secretariat](#)

***DISCLAIMER:** If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails*

---

McMaster University's *Policy and Regulations with respect to Academic Appointment, Tenure and Promotion* (Tenure and Promotion Policy)<sup>1</sup> states, "In all cases where it sends forward a recommendation relating to tenure and/or promotion the department shall have obtained written judgments on the quality of the candidate's scholarly work from at least three referees outside of the University. Care shall be taken to ensure that the referees are at 'arm's length' from the candidate" [III.13]. **If you have any connection with the candidate, please indicate the nature of the connection.**

The Tenure and Promotion Policy also contains the following comments about a candidate's scholarly work.

The search for new knowledge, whether it be in the form of new understandings of the natural world or new interpretations of the human one, is an essential part of the role of the modern university. Hence, it is expected that all faculty members will be engaged in some form of scholarly activity and the assessment of the quality of this work will be a key factor in the consideration of each faculty member's case for re-appointment, tenure and/or promotion [III.11].

It is generally accepted within the university community that an assessment by other scholars working in the same field, or closely related fields, is the best way of determining the quality of scholarly work. This assessment finds expression in

---

<sup>1</sup> All Section and clause references [-] are to the Tenure and Promotion Policy

the acceptance of papers and manuscripts for peer-reviewed publication, in academic awards and the approval of research grants, in invitations to present conference papers and university seminars, in critical reviews of published works, in exhibitions or performances, and in confidential letters of reference [III.12].

A candidate for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor shall have established a promising program of scholarly work at McMaster University and be making the results of this work available for peer review in the public domain. In the majority of disciplines this will mean that there should be evidence of successful peer-reviewed publication and strong promise of more to come [III.20].

The timing of consideration for tenure and/or promotion at McMaster depends, to some extent, on the calibre of the candidate. In normal circumstances, for a person initially appointed to this University as a full-time Assistant Professor, consideration for tenure and promotion shall take place in the fifth year of the tenure-track appointment. [III 28a.i] Outstanding candidates may be considered for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in their fourth year. [28d.i] Similarly, candidates who have had relevant experience at another university or institution may be considered before the fifth year, but not before the second year at McMaster. [28.d.ii]

For promotion to the rank of Professor a tenured faculty member shall have achieved a high degree of intellectual maturity. He or she shall have a good record as a teacher and shall be known widely on the basis of high-quality scholarship which has been evaluated by established scholars in the appropriate fields and has been published. The high-quality teaching and scholarship must both have been sustained over a period of years [III.23]. Except in exceptional circumstances, for promotion to the rank of Professor, a tenure-stream faculty member normally shall have spent at least six years in the Associate Professor rank. [III 33, 34]

While you are asked to include in your report brief answers to each of the questions listed below, please feel free to make any other comments which you believe may assist the University in arriving at a decision.

- a. Were you aware of the candidate's publications before now? Had you read any of them?
- b. What would you say is the general quality of the candidate's work?
- c. To what degree is the candidate's work original and creative? How significant is it as a scholarly contribution in his or her special area and in the subject more generally?

- d. Apart from scholarly work, do you know of any contribution the candidate made to the development of his or her subject in Canada or elsewhere, e.g., through activities in learned societies, organizing conferences, governmental commissions and so forth? In your opinion how significant have these activities been?
- e. Is the candidate's scholarship of a sufficient quality to be acceptable for tenure or promotion based on the criteria detailed above? Please explain the basis of your assessment of his or her scholarship. We recognize that scholarship/research is not the only criterion for tenure and/or promotion, but expect that it is the only one about which you have information.

Your letter will be regarded as confidential and will be made available only to the Department and Faculty Committees on Tenure and Promotion and to the Senate Committee on Appointments. However, a faculty member who is unsuccessful in this process will be provided with unattributed copies of the originals of any external letters of reference either by the Department Chair or the Chair of the Senate Committee on Appointments. Preparing an "unattributed copy" means removing the letterhead and the author's name; it also entails an obligation, on the part of the appropriate Chair, to go through the text and remove references which would directly or indirectly reveal the name of the writer.