

POLICY AND PRACTICE GOVERNING NEW FACULTY APPOINTMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This document describes a new policy and practices for the appointments and professional development of new Assistant Professors who will start Fall 2021 or later. It covers the time period from faculty search and selection, and initial appointment until promotion to the rank of Associate Professor.

Rationale

Bilkent University has been successful and, in some ways, fortunate to have attracted and retained top-notch faculty members in its ranks. Changes in local and global circumstances continue to influence all aspects of universities. This document addresses those related to faculty hiring and development practices.

Major changes proposed relate to annual reviews. The formal part of the existing system for feedback to assistant professors consists of a letter, sometimes accompanied or followed by discussions with the dean and department chair. The letter sent by the provost is brief without detail, and is not thought to be a meaningful or a personalized feedback by many faculty. Detailed explanations are left to the department chair and the dean.

Until now annual review meetings involved Provost and Associate Provosts as well as the Dean and Department Chair¹. Each faculty member's teaching performance, service, and scholarly and creative accomplishments are reviewed based on the submitted Annual Faculty Survey (AFS) forms and discussions with the chair and dean at these meetings. For those faculty members who have not yet reached the top step (5) of their rank, a step change may be recommended. The reviews are neither deep nor lengthy, unless performance is deemed to be consistently under par. The new practice aims to improve such feedback based on limited input, coupled with the current merit raises scheme for publications, have at times appeared to be at odds with an effective professional development.

Further, for various reasons, some colleagues at the university have remained at the assistant professor rank for many years. Some never even have applied for promotion and others have applied but had unsuccessful promotion reviews. Remaining at the rank of assistant professor for long periods, in some cases even after having obtained the Doçent title, is not a preferred status for the individual or the University community. The new policy and practice outlined below is designed to minimize such eventualities in the future by providing clear guidelines and consistent advice to new faculty members through a process by which a new faculty member has a clearer view of career progress and has ample time to make career decisions.

POLICY

New faculty members at the rank of assistant professor will be given an initial contract for five years. For the first four years, new faculty members will have one course reduction in their teaching duties during each academic year. Performance of the faculty member will be reviewed at the end of the fourth year, with a view toward likelihood of promotion to associate professor, in the following 1- to 4-year time frame. Appointment of a faculty member with a successful review will be extended for another 4 years beyond the initial contract. Reappointment does not guarantee promotion, as promotion takes into account external evaluation letters. A faculty member can apply for promotion at any time, but only once. Those with unsatisfactory reviews will not be re-appointed at the end of the initial contract, but will be eligible to receive compensation for the duration of their employment at Bilkent.

¹ In cases of joint appointments, respective deans and chairs will participate and provide input at every step of the decision process.

Professional Development

To facilitate career development, and also to assist in the feedback process, each new faculty member will prepare a career plan (see below) in AIRS² during the first three months of their initial starting date and discuss it with the chair and the dean. Career plans should include specific goals and plans for scholarly/research/creative works, a time-table to reach these goals and the resources necessary to accomplish them. In some cases, candidates come to interviews with such plans. Such a plan will also be helpful for self-review. These plans should not be viewed as contracts but as roadmaps for a successful career and should also include the proverbial “Plan B.” Advice should be sought regarding the feasibility of such a plan and that, if successfully carried out, it would lead to a successful career.

The fourth-year reappointment review replaces the current annual evaluations conducted by the Office of the Provost during the first four years of initial appointment. Annual reviews will be conducted by the department chair and the dean, with both chairs and deans present in case of joint appointments. The primary goal of the annual reviews is to provide career guidance and advice to the faculty member. A secondary goal of the annual reviews is to identify issues and/or problems the faculty member may be facing that impede her/his progress and give feedback to the chair and dean. During the annual reviews, individual career plans shall also be visited and compared with progress, and requests or recommendations may be made to modify the career plan with justification. Each annual review will take place in May, irrespective of starting month, and is expected to last 45-60 minutes. A copy of the summary of the annual review given to the faculty member will also be provided to the Office of the Provost.

The current step increases associated with annual reviews may be awarded during the first three years based on written recommendation with justification by the dean(s) and the chair of the department(s) in which the faculty member is appointed. After the fourth year review, they will be based on meritorious achievements as practiced presently.

Reappointment Review

The fourth-year reappointment review is intended to estimate the likelihood of success of the candidate in the subsequent years. The fourth-year reappointment review is initiated and conducted by the Office of the Provost together with the dean and chair of the department. The process will start near the end of the 8th semester following appointment. For those who start in September, review will be conducted in May of the 4th year. For those who start in February, the review will take place in December of the 8th semester.

The fourth-year review will consider (i) research/scholarship/creative output in terms of importance, quality, and amount, (ii) in-class teaching performance, contributions to educational developments, and advising undergraduate and graduate students (where applicable), and (iii) participation in and support of departmental and university activities and professional societies. If expertise to assess a faculty member’s scholarly, creative work and research is not available within the university, outside opinions may be solicited, even if orally with contemporaneous transcription, and ahead of the evaluation meeting. Since the department and faculty review each candidate annually, the fourth-year review process should not take long and conclusions should not be surprising to anyone, including the candidate. Faculty members who receive unsatisfactory reviews will have the 5th year for transitioning to a new position elsewhere.

If the fourth year review is successful, faculty member will be reappointed for another 4 years during which the next comprehensive review is for the promotion process to the rank of Associate Professor. Application for this rank must be submitted to the department, at the latest, by the end of the 8th year. In

² AIRS (Academic Information Review System) can be found on Bilkent web page under the STARS (Student Academic Information Registration System).

the meantime, annual reviews during years 5, 6 and 7 will be conducted by the department and Faculty or School, as before. The expectation is that the first three annual reviews are consistent with the 4th year review, which then should be consistent with the promotion outcome.

All Assistant Professors are expected to receive the Doçent title from InterUniversity Council (ÜAK) before the end of their 6th year at Bilkent.

Exceptions to time limits may be granted upon request by the candidate for extenuating circumstances such as child-birth, long illnesses, and unforeseen events that may be evaluated as reasonable by the Promotion and Appointments Committee.

Career Plan

Particularly during the early years of a faculty member, perhaps the most important element is effective time management among different responsibilities. Care must be taken balancing one's time to apportion necessary time for personal and family matters as well as teaching and research and other creative and scholarly work, advising, and service to the community. A well organized career plan can be helpful. A career plan describes a series of actions an individual should take in order to reach her/his professional goals. Such a plan needs to be well thought and in consultation with the chair other senior colleagues within or outside the department. A new faculty should have a fairly good idea about which courses she/he will teach in the following 3-4 years. Their research goals should target important problems, which upon successful completion, will make a difference in their academic community, thus providing them with the so-called "footprint."

A delicate balance is essential between targeting desirable goals that will bring new colleagues success and professional satisfaction, and the realizability of these goals. This is where mentorship by a senior faculty member from any part of the university can be helpful³. A career plan may include developing research alliances, networks, proposals for research funding, and topics for research. Successful faculty members have been known to have such plans and even the topic of her/his first research proposal to be submitted for external funding well before starting as a faculty member.

Course reduction granted by the university must be honored by the departments and not deferred, unless approved by the Provost. New faculty should not be assigned more than one *new* course (to be taught for the first time by the faculty member) per academic year after the first year. Department chairs have discretion over which of the two semesters the course reduction may apply in a given year in case of multiple new faculty each with a course reduction.

Potential Issues

The goal of the policy is to value, support the development of, and retain faculty members who exhibit the potential to gain international recognition, primarily through their scholarship, research and creative efforts. The policy is intended to change the current annual review to one of providing guidance and support. The policy also is designed to give an early signal to those faculty who may not meet the promotion expectations in due course. To conduct an effective fourth-year review, expectations during an initial four-year period from a faculty should be established. The type of measures used for these expectations will vary among the departments, or even disciplines within a program.

Fourth-year review, while not as rigorous as a promotion process, considers all indicators cited above, but through internal viewpoints. The review process may result in unintended outcomes in two ways. (A) The review process recommends re-appointment fully expecting that the individual will be promoted, but is

³ Advice or mentorship by senior faculty generally involves providing advice on how to navigate the system and should not be confused with joint research or publications. While there is nothing wrong with collaborations, new faculty members need breathing room to develop their own ideas with their own efforts.

not. At that point university will have to sever ties at a late date, which will be costlier to the university and the faculty member. This is an undesirable case. (B) The review process does not recognize the capability and potential accomplishments of the individual and does not recommend extension, who later turns out to be very successful. This, of course, is also an undesirable case. Such examples have been and are expected to be very rare. On balance, a candidate who does not exhibit sufficient promise for promotion will be better off at a more suitable venue to continue his/her career. It is much better to make the change earlier than later.

Calendar

An individualized calendar similar to the sample shown below will be provided to each faculty member by the dean's office upon arrival on campus.

Year 1 - Sept	Start
Year 1 - Dec	Submit Career Plan
Year 1 - May	Chair/Dean Feedback
Year 2 - May	Chair/Dean Feedback
Year 3 - May	Chair/Dean Feedback
Year 4 - May	Reappointment discussions Chair, Dean, Provost
Year 4 - August	Reappointment decision conveyed to faculty
Year 5 - August	Terminal year for nonrenewals
Year 6 - May	Docent title application must be completed, preferably earlier
Year 7 -	
Year 8 - August	Deadline for application for promotion to Assoc Prof
Year 9 -	

PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

The following is an introductory guide to the promotion and appointment procedures at Bilkent. The [relevant Faculty Handbook web page](#) contains a more extensive review of the rules and regulations on this subject. Details pertaining to the application process can be found on the Provost web page under a separate title: *Checklist for Promotion Process*.

Appointment and Promotion Criteria

Bilkent is a “research” university. Full time faculty holding ranks of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor at Bilkent are expected to concentrate on their research/scholarly/creative work and be internationally known for their contributions to human knowledge or for their creative work. Appointments and promotions at all levels consider the excellence of scholarly or creative work of faculty members in their fields and achievements in teaching and service. Assessments consider attaining different levels of achievement and distinction appropriate for each rank and discipline.

Teaching and service activities are important for the maintenance and sustainability of a creative and research environment. However, especially at the assistant and associate professor levels, significant accomplishments in scholarship, research, and creative work weigh more heavily in gaining international recognition. Promotion to professor puts somewhat more weight on teaching and service by the university committees, but remain focused on scholarship, research, and creative activities.

Appointment and promotion to assistant, associate, and full professorship require fulfillment of the relevant criteria for research or creative work excellence, which are as follows:

Criteria for academic ranks:

Professor

Researchers who are renowned in their field with their sustained contributions to human knowledge or creative activities and are internationally recognized as such.

Associate Professor

Researchers who have made significant impact in their fields with their contributions to human knowledge or creative activities, who have the potential to be renowned, and are internationally recognized as such.

Assistant Professor

Researchers who have the potential to be first associate and then full professor at Bilkent by virtue of their contributions to human knowledge or creative activities in their fields.

Evaluation of candidates for appointment and promotion

The appointment and promotion processes at Bilkent are designed to ascertain that the candidates fulfill the requirement of the relevant titles, to hire, retain, and promote those who do, and provide timely feedback to those who do not.

While the criteria for different ranks and the broad outlines of the appointment and promotion process are the same for all faculties, the specifics of the processes show some variation depending on the needs of different fields.

When to Apply

Assistant Professors Applying for Promotion:

Clock: Application for promotion the rank of Associate Professor must be submitted to the department by the end of the eighth year. Faculty/department will let the candidate know the timing. The clock begins when a faculty member enters Bilkent faculty roster as assistant professor, but does not include the time spent as a visiting faculty member.

Maternity Extension: There are extensions for childbirth while on Bilkent faculty roster. For female faculty members, application deadline is postponed one semester for every childbirth, not to exceed a total of one academic year.

Knowing When to Apply: Candidates receive formal feedback from department chairs and deans every year until the fourth year of appointment at which time there is a comprehensive review conducted by the Office of the Provost for extension of the initial five-year appointment. This feedback should help the applicants assess whether they are ready to apply for promotion, but does not guarantee a particular outcome. Assistant professors need not wait until the maximum allowed period and may apply for promotion when they feel they fulfill the requirement for promotion to the new rank. However, they can apply for promotion only once.

Docent — The Inter-University Council (UAK) *Docent* Title: The evaluation for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor is Bilkent's internal assessment and is independent of the UAK process for the Docent title. The UAK Docent title is required for completion of the promotion process at Bilkent, however it is not sufficient for the success of application for assessment. Faculty members are expected to successfully complete Docent applications by the end of their sixth year on Bilkent roster for a timely progression of promotion process.

Faculty members may apply to Bilkent promotion as soon as they complete their application to UAK for the Docent title.

Outcomes:

Positive: Candidates who are successful in the Bilkent assessment process will be promoted to the rank of associate professor immediately⁴, if they already have the UAK Docent title. If they do not yet have the Docent title, promotion will become effective upon receiving the Docent title.

Negative: Bilkent appoints every assistant professor with the expectation and hope that they will be promoted. If the promotion decision is negative, the default outcome is for the assistant professor to be given time until the end of the following academic year on Bilkent roster, during which they they would find other employment.

Applying for Promotion to the rank of Professor:

Faculty members are eligible for application to professorship five years after they receive their CoHE Docent title. There is no clock; application is when the candidates feel they have fulfilled the requirement of the professor rank.

It is important to note that staying “too long” in the assistant and associate professor ranks may bring a disadvantage in terms of comparisons external referees make with cohorts of the candidates.

⁴ “Immediately” is subject to fulfillment of legal requirements by the university. Candidates do not have to do anything at this stage but CoHE regulations require various university bodies to approve the promotion, based on the assessments of five professors in Turkish universities. The promotion is not final until these approvals are given.

Positive: The candidate is promoted to professorship immediately⁵.

Negative: The candidate remains at the current rank.

⁵ See footnote 4.