

History Department COVID-19 Amendment to Evaluation Criteria Guidelines

Over the course of 2020-2021, the world has been falling apart around us, and like others in our communities, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on History faculty across all areas of our work. We especially note the inequitable landing of the pandemic's impacts in our community, with its particular implications in terms of gender and race. We recognize that some faculty may have faced additional childcare responsibilities. Others may have confronted serious health concerns themselves or in their families. All of this suggests that we need to be especially attuned to each evaluatee's COVID-narrative.

Though department members have managed these impacts with impressive creativity, we offer this amendment to our evaluation standards to recognize that much has been beyond our control. To ensure fairness for those who will be evaluated in what we hope is the soon-approaching wake of this scourge, we offer the following amendment language to our department's Criteria and Procedures for Evaluation.

Teaching

Our current guidelines consider Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) as one part of our peer assessment of our colleagues' teaching. We understand that teaching evaluations are not a good mechanism for evaluating teaching excellence, even in the best of times. Recent scholarship makes clear the role that bias plays in students' evaluations, particularly at the nexus of identity, and one must always read evaluations carefully and critically. It is unclear what impact the pandemic is having in terms of bias. In turn, the reality of students' lives during the pandemic may also produce a general dissatisfaction, for instance with remote learning, that could affect students' evaluations of teaching. As a result, we will continue to read SETs carefully and critically, considering with care their problematic use in evaluations, and will place a much higher value on peer evaluations.

Advising

In recent years we have noticed that our work as advisors has grown both to include greater attention to mentoring as well as significant attention to students' needs outside their intellectual development. The pandemic has increased exponentially these parts of our advising labor, while making it all the more difficult to document this work. We will rely even more fully than previously on evaluatees' own narratives of advising in upcoming evaluations.

Professional Growth

The pandemic has negatively affected our opportunities to engage our scholarly work in a number of ways. The prohibitions on travel, the closure of archives, the lack of access to interlibrary loan and the corresponding limits of SUMMIT to meet our research needs, the requirements of social distancing and the mandate against public events that have made participant-observation research impossible, the cancellation of many conferences and invited talks particularly in the early months of the pandemic, have all had substantial impacts on department members. It has mattered a great deal, too, where faculty were in the span of their projects when the pandemic hit. For those in the early stages of projects, progress has been nearly impossible. We will continue to encourage evaluatees to explain their "in-progress work,"

as explained on pages 3 and 4 of our existing guidelines, and as evaluators we will be attentive to the reality that progress may have been slowed or stalled entirely due to COVID.

University Service

The History Department has a long record of exceptional university and community service, and notes that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on this work. In many locations, service has been made more time-consuming, and often more exhausting as well. Many committees have had to find new ways of doing their work, slowing progress while also demanding time from faculty. Invisible labor has increased as students wrestle with mental health issues, concerns about their own safety and that of others, their own illnesses or those of family members, financial worries, the impacts of white supremacy and their own engagement with the processes of racial reckoning, and more. Put simply, COVID has demanded still more time for our university service and often more emotional energy. We recognize that the enhanced demands may have landed differentially within the department as well. We continue to value university service, but want to acknowledge the additional stresses it has placed on our colleagues, and the ways this may have affected other areas of evaluation.

Community Service

Community service has proven virtually impossible for many colleagues due to closures, social distancing, prohibitions on travel and other factors, and so we will not expect colleagues to have engaged in community service during the pandemic.

Note on Streamlined Evaluations

In the midst of the pandemic, it has become common practice to ask those at the rank of Full Professor to have their reviews conducted at the beginning of the fall, cutting by a semester the amount of time between their evaluations. We will take this into account, recognizing that it may affect colleagues' productivity in some areas of evaluation, in particular Professional Development and University and Community Service.