

Political Science Faculty Mentorship Plan

The policy below was approved at the faculty meeting on 03/22/2021

The purposes of this plan are to improve faculty mentorship in the department of Political Sciences and to bring departmental policies in line with college policies on *Probationary Faculty Mentoring*¹ and *Associate Professor Time-in-Rank Policies*².

Probationary Faculty

Upon arriving at the University of Kentucky, the Chair will consult with Probationary Faculty and the Executive Committee to appoint a Primary Mentor. By the end of the first academic year of the Probationary Faculty's appointment, the Chair will add two additional faculty to create a Mentorship Committee for the Probationary Faculty. The Chair will appoint these additional members upon consultation with the probationary faculty and the Primary Mentor. The Chair can alter the Mentorship Committee (including the Primary Mentor) at any point upon request by the Probationary Faculty.

The Primary Mentor should meet at least once per term with the Probationary Faculty. The Mentorship Committee is expected (at a minimum) to observe the Probationary Faculty teaching at least 2 times per year. Both the Primary Mentor and the Mentorship Committee are encouraged to be flexible in adapting to needs of Probationary Faculty. For instance, Probationary Faculty may request that the Mentorship Committee's role be more expansive than the minimal requirements of observing teaching, perhaps meeting to comment on drafts of work, provide general guidance, etc.

- (1) Regarding meetings, the intent is to remain consistent with College guidelines: "The purpose of the mentoring process is to help probationary faculty adjust to their new environment, provide them with guidance as they launch their research agendas, help them navigate the appropriate levels and types of institutional and professional service, and help them improve their teaching." This entails both an advocacy role and creativity in supporting what is best for Probationary Faculty. For example, it may be useful to pressure the Chair for funding to support visiting speakers that align with Probationary Faculty research interests, limit new course preps, or provide extra funds once start-up funds expire.
- (2) Regarding observing teaching, the intent is for the Mentorship Committee to share the workload of observing and supporting Probationary Faculty teaching.

Department Chairs are expected to meet with Probationary Faculty regularly. At a minimum, Chairs should meet with Probationary Faculty upon conclusion of the yearly FMER cycle.

The Chair should make a strong effort to include the Primary Mentor (or the entire Mentorship Committee, when appropriate) on all vital communication with the Faculty Member in an attempt to establish and solidify a norm where the Probationary Faculty *always* feels strongly

¹ <https://www.as.uky.edu/probationary-faculty-mentoring>

² <https://www.as.uky.edu/associate-professor-time-rank-policies>

supported by the Mentorship Committee and *never* feels undue pressure from department administration.³

Regarding financial support, the department recognizes that start-up funds are often insufficient to cover all needs for Assistant Professors, and these funds often expire starting in year 4 of the tenure clock. Mentors are expected to advocate for additional funds to support Assistant Professors for things like bringing in visiting speakers that align with Assistant Professors' expertise, attending more conferences than can be covered with normal funds, etc. When possible, the department supports and expects the Chair to allocate department funds from either the operating budget or discretionary account towards supporting Assistant Professors' paths to promotion.

Associate Professor Mentorship

Associate Professor mentorship should largely align with Assistant Professor mentorship with the goal of continued support through promotion to full. However, the department recognizes at least three ways that mentorship for Associate Professors may depart from mentorship of Assistant Professors.

First, Associate Professors often have more clearly defined preferences about what they want and need from mentorship, which may not align with the Mentorship Committee model. Upon appointment to Associate Professor, therefore, the Chair will meet with the Associate Professor to develop an *Individualized Mentorship Plan*. This plan may include a continuation of the Mentorship Committee and frequent classroom observations, but it may also depart from this model in whatever way the Associate Professor feels is most helpful.

Second, the path towards promotion to Full Professor is in many ways more nebulous than the guidelines to promotion to Associate, and the path lacks the same level of frequent and formal feedback mechanisms like yearly FMERs, 4th-year review, etc. Thus, mentorship should include consistent advice on progress and opportunities for Associate Professors to receive feedback beyond UK to help assess their national and international reputations. At a minimum, in-house feedback should include a discussion of progress between the Associate Professor and the Chair at the conclusion of each bi-annual FMER cycle, which may be attended by the Primary Mentor upon request by the Associate Professor. Associate Professors may also request discussions among all Full Professors about progress and should be granted such a discussion upon request. The point of these discussions should be to provide helpful and informal feedback on progress; no formal evaluations should be written or include in the Associate Professor's file. Regarding external evaluations (and related to the point below), mentorship should include advice and

³ "Vital communication" is primarily defined as communication related to committee and teaching assignments, preparation for reviews (e.g., third- and fourth-year reviews; FMER; P&T dossiers), and anything that could be reasonably viewed as pressure that might delay progress towards promotion. With matters that should remain confidential (e.g., personnel issues or FMER discussions), the Chair should welcome participation by the Primary Mentor if such participation is requested by the Faculty member and is allowable under university and college rules. Note that this means that the Chair cannot ask the Primary Advisor to attend meetings like post-FMER meetings because that may violate Probationary Faculty confidentiality rights. However, Probationary Faculty may request attendance of Primary Mentors and should expect this request to be granted by the Chair if possible under University and College rules.

support for Associate Professors to receive feedback and mentorship from scholars outside of UK.

Third, the department recognizes that Associate Professors need to build and maintain professional networks beyond UK to develop their national and international reputations, strong scholarly agendas, and to navigate disciplinary service opportunities (*inter alia*). This likely requires financial support, especially given that start-up funds have likely expired. Thus, Primary Mentors should advocate on behalf of Associate Professors for financial support and external networking opportunities. For example, the department should seek to provide funds to bring in scholars aligned with Associate Professor's research expertise, attend dinners at conferences with scholars, etc. The Chair should facilitate external informal evaluations of the Associate Professor's record upon request. When possible, the department supports and expects the Chair to allocate department funds from either the operating budget or discretionary account towards supporting Associate Professors' paths to promotion.