

Standards for academic advancement

Department of Philosophy

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Philosophy is a broad discipline that spans a wide range of problems and questions. Philosophical questions encompass theoretical matters such as the nature of thought, consciousness, free will, logic, mathematics, morality, and good government. Many topics will intersect with foundational questions in the sciences, e.g., the nature of selection in biology, the nature of measurement in physics. Philosophy also draws heavily on its own history, so the history of philosophy is also a major topic, both in its own right and as a source of insight into contemporary problems. Applied philosophy brings the analytic tools, approaches, and conceptual frameworks used across the fields of philosophy to bear directly on matters of practical concern. Argument, analysis, and a wide command of the intellectual landscape are at the core of philosophy's practice.

Two points about the field may be useful to bear in mind:

- *Cohesive discipline.* Despite philosophy's great breadth, it is a surprisingly cohesive discipline in the US. Specialization happens comparatively late in graduate school. That fact plus a culture of maintaining competence across areas means that we share roughly the same training, metrics of success, and more. Ethicists and logicians, for instance, work on very different topics, but they will tend to agree on the major journals, what results are important, and much more.
- *Well-defined market.* We operate in a clearly demarcated competitive market. For better or worse, our ability to recruit and retain faculty and the best graduate students requires that we maintain our focus on rankings of research departments. The most widely accepted ranking is the *Philosophical Gourmet Report*. Most recently (2016), UCSD ranked 23 overall nationally, but in some specialty subfields (e.g., in philosophy of science, philosophy of physics, philosophy of cognitive science, and history of philosophy) ranked in the top 10 internationally, and in many others (e.g., ethics, political philosophy) the top 20 internationally. In the latest NRC ranking, we received an S-rank high of 9 and low of 21 overall.

Criteria for advancement

Following UC San Diego APM 210 guidelines, we evaluate (1) teaching, (2) research and other creative work, (3) professional activity, and (4) university and public service. Rather than rehearse abstract virtues listed in the guidelines, we feel this document will be more helpful if it points to field-specific ways of understanding merit.

We take (3) and (4) very seriously in our appraisals, but we are no different from most departments in these respects. We try to protect junior professors from exceedingly

onerous administrative tasks, we expect senior professors to take on more service and have greater visibility, and we reward especially creative or industrious contributions to the department, campus, profession, and diversity.

We expect (1), teaching, to be excellent at all levels. Here are two points worth bearing in mind.

- *No prior experience.* One thing that sets teaching philosophy apart from most disciplines is that students won't have had a philosophy class in high school and so will come to their first course (which at UC San Diego could be at any level) either with no expectations or mistaken ones. They might find it challenging in ways that they could not have anticipated, and this makes the job of a teacher all the more complex.
- *Writing intensive.* Like some other humanities and social science classes, but by no means all, nearly all of our classes require substantial writing, which, again, many students might find challenging, especially if they are coming from non-writing intensive majors.

Finally, on research we can make a number of important observations:

- *Advancement and promotion.* In advancements and promotions *all faculty* at the same rank or above read the candidate's work, discuss it carefully and critically in a department meeting, and vote. This process is the basis of our evaluation. The Department, more so than many others, uses the advancement or promotion as a time to make a *professional judgment* about the significance of a professor's work.
- *Books.* Unlike in some other areas of humanities, there is no norm about books in the field. Books are prized but not expected. Many distinguished leaders in the field (including Distinguished Professors in the University of California system) have never published a single book. However, since they can provide an opportunity for a significant new theory, they can be important both intellectually and in terms of impact.
- *Articles.* Acceptance rates in the top general journals (e.g., *Philosophical Review*, *Journal of Philosophy*, *Mind*) are as low as 3%–4%. Some specialty journals (e.g., *Ethics*, *Philosophy of Science*) are viewed as close to their equal. Getting a paper published in one of these journals is typically viewed as a serious mark of distinction. Obviously quality and venue can vary independently, so ultimately significance is decided in the faculty discussion of the work — even in cases of a prominent publication.
- *Citations.* Unlike in many other fields, citations are generally not used as a proxy for quality in philosophy.
- *Chapters in collections.* Pieces in collections can vary tremendously in their prestige, from a thinly refereed conference proceedings of an obscure workshop to a major chapter in a prestigious collection printed by a top publisher. Chapters in books can be longer than journal articles, allow the possibility of greater and more original expression. *Importantly, book chapters can be as or even more important than journal articles, and even than those in the very best journals.* Book chapters are not typically just a summary of research found in one's articles, as they can be in some fields; rather, they may be a major vehicle of original and significant research in philosophy.

Naturally, some invitations are also a sign of external prestige and impact. To be invited to write the entry on “free will” in one of the *Oxford Handbook* series is a mark of great standing in the field. For natural reasons, senior philosophers tend to have more of these than junior philosophers.

- *Interdisciplinary*. Philosophy can be massively interdisciplinary. Philosophy of mind may overlap with cognitive science, history of philosophy with history, philosophy of law with jurisprudence, philosophy of physics with physics, and so on. Two points are worth bearing in mind on this topic. 1. Often these interdisciplinary fields are coherent and to some extent autonomous intellectual areas. They ask their own questions, maintain well-defined societies, journals, conferences, etc. Importantly, they may have standards of success that differ from those used in the overlapping field itself — for instance, the philosophical foundations of a science may prize analytical rigor, precise definitions, and consistency, whereas the science itself may prize fruitfulness. 2. We count publications in these fields the same way we would those in philosophy. If significant, a paper in history, science, or jurisprudence (etc.) might count as much as a paper in a philosophy journal.
- *Coauthoring*. Formerly rare in philosophy, it is now increasingly common. Again, two comments are in order. 1. Almost always there is *some* significant contribution from a mentioned author. Because there are rarely materials or labs involved in philosophical research, opportunities for incidental attachment to a paper are few and far between. 2. No convention on ordering of names yet exists. Often a footnote states the relative contributions; if not, letters in the file will address this matter.

Normal merit, promotions in rank, acceleration

With these points in mind, we can state our understanding of the research necessary for a normal merit (at any level) and major promotions in rank.

Normal merit: With all the expected provisos (i.e., that article number, venue, and other proxies for quality are not quality), we expect 1–2 article-sized original publications containing *significant* research per year, or equivalent, where significance and equivalence are decided by the professional judgment of the faculty. We also give extra credit for especially substantial pieces or those appearing in especially distinguished venues.

Tenure: Generalizing from many past tenure decisions and discussion, the Department has generally tenured professors working on the higher end of normal research production. That is, all else being equal and with all the above provisos, successful candidates should expect to publish 9–12 significant articles, or their equivalent, by the end of their sixth year. Extra credit may be given for especially substantial works, as above.

Full Professor: For promotion to Full Professor the Department expects the completion of a second major phase of research beyond that for which the candidate earned tenure. Sometimes this culminates in a published monograph, but often it takes the form of a series of substantial articles focused on one or more topics.

Professor, Step VI: The Department follows PPM 230-28 in requiring for advancement to step VI not only continuing excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service, but, additionally, national or international recognition of the candidate's research. Now that soliciting external letters for promotions to this rank has become optional, the Department makes decisions about whether to seek letters on a case-by-case basis, ordinarily seeking letters when these are needed to provide evidence of the candidate's national/international reputation.

Above-scale: For promotion to Professor, Above-scale, the Department expects the completion of an additional major phase of research, beyond that for which the candidate was promoted to Full Professor, and which may, again, take the form of either a published monograph or a series of substantial articles on one or more topics. Per PPM 230-28, advancement to Above-scale requires excellence in all three areas of research, teaching, and service, and the demonstration of an international reputation, and is reserved for scholars and teachers of the highest distinction. Since advancement at this rank is considered a career review, the Department ordinarily solicits at least five external reviews (including some from international referees) in such cases.

Acceleration: Accelerations across two merit steps require roughly double the amount of research output required for a single step, with no weaknesses in either service or teaching.