
Directive for Assistant Professor Mentorship

Approved by Faculty Council on March 2nd, 2011

1. Scope of the proposal

The following proposal addresses the issue of monitoring assistant professors (AP), by placing greater emphasis on the need for coaching and less on reviewing performance, since the latter need, in our opinion, is sufficiently taken into account through the “reappointment” (promotion to senior ass. prof.) procedure after three years (see “Procedures, Policies and Criteria for Promotion and Tenure” (2006), chapter VI). To establish additional mechanisms of control would not only be excessively bureaucratic but also hazardous as these mechanisms must not preempt the opinion of the official review committee.

Thus it is proposed to institute a mentorship program within the Faculty. The assistance of a mentor would be compulsory until promotion to senior assistant professor; after promotion it is optional.

2. Task of the mentor

The role of the mentor is not one of an evaluator: in fact his main task is to provide support and assistance to the AP.

At the beginning of their academic career APs can need help and guidance regarding the accomplishment of their tasks – be it in the field of research, teaching or service. Help and advice from a mentor is important, as the transition from a subordinate position, such as maître assistant or lecturer – where one basically works according to the instructions of a superior and under direct supervision – to an independent position as professor, is not easy. Support should also be offered to APs who previously held similar positions in other universities in order to favour their integration within USI and/or the Swiss academic environment.

3. Appointment of the mentor

The mentor is appointed by the Dean not later than one month after the AP has taken up employment. The AP can suggest potential mentors to the Dean.

The mentor must be either a full professor or an associate professor of the Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society; exceptionally, a “Prof. Titolare” may also be chosen. The academic field of the mentor does not need to be the same as that of the AP.

4. The relations between the Assistant Professor and his/her mentor

The mentor meets formally with the AP once per semester. During the meeting the achievements of the AP in both research and teaching are discussed and feedback is provided.

At the end of the meeting the mentor and the AP may agree on specific quantitative and/or qualitative objectives to be reached during the next semester. Notes from the meeting may be taken for the records.

The AP may request the guidance of the mentor on specific issues and problems at any time.

In case of a conflict between the mentor and the AP, the Dean, having heard the two parties, may appoint a new mentor.

5. Reporting

At the end of each year the mentor reports to the Board of Professors on the overall performances of the AP. The Dean informs the AP of the outcome of the meeting.

When the AP is up for promotion either to senior AP or to associate professor, the mentor sends a report on the overall performance of the AP to the Reviewing Committee; if needed the Committee may interview the mentor. The mentor cannot be appointed as a member of the Reviewing Committee.