

Appendix III
Department of History, University of Houston
Merit Guidelines

Purpose: The History Department has an on-going commitment to the objective, careful, and thorough assessment it undertakes annually as part of the merit system. Department faculty members annually elect a committee of three faculty members, one from each rank, with rules ensuring a fair rotation in the assignment of this critical responsibility. No faculty member shall serve on the Merit Committee more than twice in five years. To provide continuity, the tenured faculty member who receives the highest number of votes will serve for two years.* Each member of the democratically elected and representative Merit Committee reads all the faculty activity reports, supplemented by c.v.'s, teaching evaluations, copies of recent publications, and other materials to assist the merit committee, as described below. The committee then assembles and deliberates carefully before assigning each member of the faculty an overall merit rating in keeping with the department's guidelines. The department's approach avoids the appearance and reality of vesting arbitrary power over raises and other rewards in a single individual.

*Note: A fourth member of the department, who must be tenured, replaces the assistant professor for the purpose of the annual post-tenure review. This fourth colleague is elected on the same ballot as the Merit Committee.

Procedures: The History Department considers the Merit Committee's overall merit rating a strong recommendation to the Chair, more than merely advisory. After deliberating as described below, the Merit Committee will submit its overall merit ratings directly to individual faculty members, along with a deadline for written appeals to the Merit Committee, and will notify the department by email that evaluations have been distributed. Any faculty member not satisfied with his/her overall merit rating must submit a written appeal and also may request a meeting with the Merit Committee. After further deliberation in response to appeals, the Merit Committee will make its final recommendations and send its merit reports for all faculty to the Chair.

In cases where the Chair disagrees with the Merit Committee's overall merit ratings, the Chair will meet with the Merit Committee to attempt to come to agreement. In cases of continued disagreement, the Executive Committee (of which the Chair is a member) will determine the final overall merit rating for the faculty member in question.

Evaluation of Merit Committee and Department Chair: The Chair will select a subcommittee of three members of the standing Executive Committee (one from each rank) to undertake the evaluation of members of the Merit Committee. The Chair and the subcommittee will make every effort to ensure thorough and consistent evaluation of Merit Committee members.

The Merit Committee will evaluate the Department Chair as a member of the faculty, modifying the departmental guidelines to allow due consideration for the emphasis Chairs must place on their administrative duties.

Operation of the Merit Committee: Each committee will be chaired by the most senior member of the committee. The committee chair will provide each member with the current merit guidelines (which include a standard evaluation form as Addendum 1), the prior year's merit reports, annual reports by preceding merit committees (see below), a summary of teaching evaluation data for all faculty, and departmental salary information for consideration in equity requests. Every member of the committee shall review the merit files of every member of the department, using the standard evaluation form to highlight the important aspects of research, teaching, and service.

The committee will meet to discuss the Faculty Activity Reports and will arrive at an overall merit rating for each person. Each member of the faculty will be provided with a written evaluation summarizing the committee's findings and its final overall merit rating. The chair of the committee will divide up the responsibility of writing the evaluations among committee members. Prior to distribution, committee members will submit the written evaluations to the committee chair who will review them for stylistic consistency before submitting them to the individual faculty members.

At the end of the process, the Merit Committee will write a report summarizing the committee's work, explaining any difficult decisions, and noting any concerns or other information that might be useful for subsequent Merit Committees. These reports will be kept on file and passed along each year to incoming Merit Committees. The purpose is to improve consistency and also to identify issues that may require adjustment of the merit guidelines.

Faculty members shall be responsible for providing the Merit Committee with copies of any publications, a Statement on Research to supplement the Faculty Activity Reporting Form (see Addendum 2 below), and any supporting materials that may assist the committee in its deliberations. Any member of the faculty failing to submit a faculty activity form after the department has made a reasonable effort to solicit the form shall be assigned an overall merit rating of 1.

Merit Category Guidelines: Overall Merit Rating (5 point scale)*

The department recognizes and rewards faculty excellence in research, teaching, and service through the overall merit rating. Because the University of Houston is a research university, and because of the high priority the department places on research, the overall merit rating (5 point scale) shall be equal to the research rating (5 point scale). However, in cases of exemplary teaching or service, the overall merit rating may be raised above the research rating; likewise, in cases of derelict teaching or service, the overall merit rating may be lowered below the research rating. The following serve as guidelines for raising or lowering the overall merit rating relative to the research rating:

+1 A faculty member's overall merit rating shall be increased to 1 level above the research rating in cases where the faculty member earns a teaching rating of "exceeds expectations" two years in a row or earns a service rating of "exceeds expectations" two years in a row. The maximum possible rating is a 5 (if a faculty member earning this boost already had a research

