

AAHM Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure for Historians in Professional Schools in the Health Sciences

Many professional schools in the health sciences—including medicine, public health, nursing, pharmacy, and others—have departments, programs, or individual faculty whose expertise is in the history of the health sciences. Yet committees who evaluate faculty for promotion and tenure in those institutions are often far removed from history or related disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. This statement provides a brief orientation to the nature of historical research for biological scientists and clinicians who are charged with the assessment of faculty in the humanities and qualitative social sciences for promotion and tenure. While institutions will vary in process, we also encourage the inclusion or advisory participation of historians on promotion and tenure committees in order to interpret external letters and assess the candidate's dossier.

In sharp contrast to many in the basic sciences and clinical research, historians usually work independently to create a substantial independent body of research work. Technical skills include a mastery of theory, archival research, logic and argumentation, foreign languages, and an understanding of the subject sciences. Historians' peer-reviewed major articles (usually single-authored) are long and complex, presenting argument and analysis beyond simply "writing up" results; it usually takes a year or more to finish a major article. Peer-reviewed chapters in edited volumes are the equivalent of articles. Book-length monographs—which are also subject to extensive peer-review—are the culmination of years of work and are judged on their ability to move the field forward. Finally, time to publication is significantly longer in humanities and social sciences than in most sciences. An article accepted for publication can take up to two years to appear in print; books—typically published with university presses—can take even longer. Thus, a historian's dossier usually includes a moderate number of very substantial publications that contribute to a carefully considered research program that advances the field of history of medicine.

Biomedical scientists will also notice differences in a historian's record of extramural funding, since very little funding is available. For example, there is little NIH funding available for historians. As of 2014, there is currently one category of funding specific to the medical humanities, the G13 funded by the National Library of Medicine, which funds only three to five projects per year. History of medicine projects are rarely eligible for NSF funds. Most government and foundation grants for which historians are eligible—the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the American Council for Learned Societies, and others—are modest, often funding projects with budgets of tens of thousands of dollars or less. The structure of research funding for historians also differs dramatically from that in the sciences. Funding is almost always one-time and project-based, usually offering summer salary support and/or teaching buyouts, and only rarely pays indirect costs. Another prestigious category of funding is the travel grant for research in specific collections. Although these

grants are typically quite modest, they are highly competitive and represent significant achievements for those who receive such awards. Given the high level of competition, winning even a small extramural grant is an important mark of distinction for historians of medicine.

Standards for promotion and tenure vary widely among institutions. It is thus not possible to establish a single set of standards that indicate what makes a tenurable historian. Yet the standards of excellence in historical research are more generalizable. As in the biomedical sciences, peer review is the key means for assessing quality research programs that are carefully thought out, based on sound methodology, rigorously executed, and which push the boundaries of the field. The critical measures of that work are presentations at national and international conferences, invited lectures, publication in peer-reviewed journals, submission of competitive proposals for extramural funding, and publication of academic monographs with university presses.

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