

**AALTO TENURE TRACK**  
17 June 2021

**AALTO UNIVERSITY**  
**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT – REVISED VERSION**

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT**

*This document is a description of the Aalto University tenure track system and associated processes. Aalto University reviews and updates these rules and procedures regularly. The version history is available at the end of this document.*

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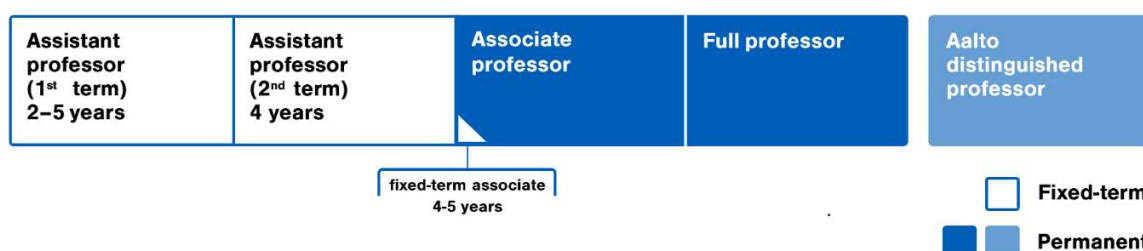
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# 1 A CAREER ON THE AALTO TENURE TRACK

Aalto Tenure Track is a standard career advancement path, providing a transparent and consistent process with common rules throughout the university, its schools and departments. Aalto Tenure Track follows the general guidelines and principles set at the university, such as the Code of Conduct, HR policies, and responsible researcher evaluation (the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, DORA). Regulations on disqualification are also followed throughout the tenure track procedure.

## 1.1 AALTO TENURE TRACK POSITIONS

In the Aalto tenure track system, there are three professor positions: assistant professor, associate professor and full professor, as shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** The Aalto University tenure track includes fixed-term positions for assistant and associate professors and permanent (tenured) positions for associate and full professors. Aalto distinguished professor is an honorary position and appointed from among the full professors at Aalto.

### Assistant professor

The assistant professorship is often the first step in the tenure track and always a fixed-term appointment either to assistant professor (first term) or assistant professor (second term). The first term has flexibility and may last two to five year. The second term is four years.

Both terms end in a review (see criteria in Appendix 3). If the review is positive, an assistant professor (1<sup>st</sup> term) advances to assistant professor (2<sup>nd</sup> term) and an assistant professor (2<sup>nd</sup> term) is tenured to associate professor. Reappointment to the same level is not possible. If the review is not positive, the employment ends when the existing contract expires. The full length of the assistant professorship is six to nine years.

During the fixed-term period(s), assistant professors are expected to gain merits in the domain of research (or artistic work) and the domain of teaching. The prerequisite to advance (i.e. to be tenured) is to achieve an international level of excellence in one of the domains and a level of high quality or better in the other. The criteria are described in detail in Appendix 3. When appointed to an assistant professor position, the key criteria in evaluation is the academic potential of the candidate.

### Associate professor

The associate professorship is usually a tenured (i.e. permanent) position. To be appointed to the position of associate professor, the person has to demonstrate merits in the domain of research (or artistic work) and the domain of teaching. The merits are expected to reach an international level of excellence in one of the domains and a level of high quality or better in the other. The criteria are described in detail in Appendix 3.

When a first recruitment to Aalto is considered, an associate professor may also be hired in rare cases for a fixed-term of four to five years, e.g. the candidate's merits meet tenure requirements to a large extent but not entirely. The fixed-term ends with a standard tenure review and if successful, with an appointment to a tenured associate professor position. If

tenure is not granted, the employment ends when the current contract expires. The contract cannot be renewed.

A tenured associate professor can advance to full professor through a review process. The advancement generally takes place, at the earliest, after four years as a tenured associate professor. In rare cases of exceptional merit, a review can be initiated earlier. The initiation of an early tenure review process requires a decision by the provost, based on a proposal from the dean.

A waiting period of at least two years is required after an unsuccessful full professor advancement review.

### **Full professor**

Persons appointed to full professor are expected to conduct research (or artistic work) and teaching that demonstrate a continued international level of excellence in at least one these domains; and high quality or better is required in the other domain (i.e. either in research/artistic work or in teaching). They are also expected to demonstrate contributions to societal impact and academic service in their fields of expertise.

The criteria for full professors are described in detail in Appendix 3.

### **Aalto distinguished professor**

The president may invite exceptionally qualified full professors to the honorary position of Aalto distinguished professor.

## **1.2 RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT PROCESS**

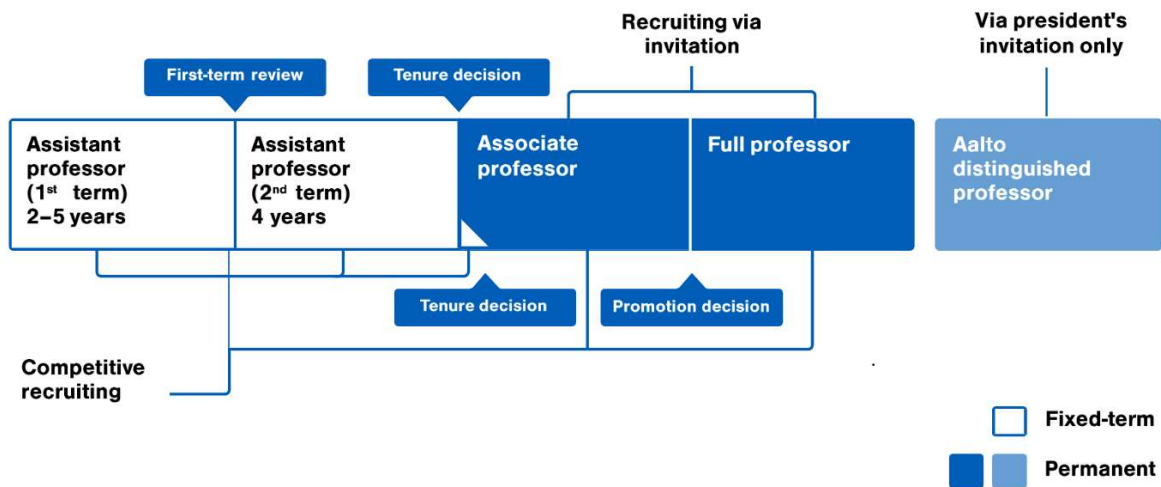
The Aalto tenure track is a transparent and standardised process for recruitment and advancement. The decision to recruit or advance a candidate is always based on a holistic evaluation of merits, and made on the recommendation of both internal and external experts. In this context, 'holistic' means that instead of calculating merits based on a list of metrics and indicators, merits are assessed as a whole, and compared to an international level of excellence. The review criteria consist of key aspects of academic work, and include elements related to quality of research (artistic/professional) work, teaching competence, and impact and service contributions. More details on criteria are available in Appendix 3.

Deans at each school are responsible for the fairness and transparency of the recruitment and advancement processes. For each recruitment, tenure review or advancement to full professor, the dean nominates a departmental committee that is responsible for organising the evaluation process. The committee examines the application(s), consults a minimum of four external reviewers and the school's teaching competence assessment committee and, after hearing the opinion of the faculty, prepares a recruitment or advancement proposal for the dean.

The head of department initiates and organises the review for advancing assistant professors (1<sup>st</sup> term) to assistant professors (2<sup>nd</sup> term), assessing the candidate's performance and development towards the subsequent tenure evaluation. As part of the review, the opinions of the department's non-disqualified tenured professors are heard.

After consulting the school's tenure track committee, the dean makes the recruitment and advancement decisions for non-tenured (fixed-term) positions. For tenured positions, after consulting the school's tenure track committee, the dean makes a proposal to the president, who makes a final decision. Before taking a decision, the president consults the Aalto Tenure Track Committee.

Reviews of fixed-term professorships are usually started approximately 12 months before the candidate's contract expires. The aim is that the result of the review is available six months before the end of the current contract. The tenured position starts at the earliest six months before the end of the fixed-term contract.



**Figure 2.** The recruitment and advancement processes at Aalto University.

### 1.3 DIVERSITY

Aalto University is committed to promoting diversity, equality and non-discrimination in all of its activities. The general equality principles are defined in the Equality Plan. According to the Equality Plan, all members of the Aalto community have equal opportunities for personal development and career advancements on the basis of their academic and/or professional qualifications.

Diversity is to be considered in all recruitments, also in invitational recruitments. Every applicant is to be treated equally in recruitment and advancement processes.

Equality principles are to be actively promoted at the different levels of the processes, for example, when selecting expert reviewers, members of departmental, school or Aalto level committees, members of teaching competence assessment committees at the schools, as well as in guidelines, criteria, and communications at the different stages.

Aalto has flexible policies and practices on family leave related to support personnel, irrespective of gender.

### 1.4 CODE OF CONDUCT

The Aalto Code of Conduct summarises the principles of fair play and integrity that govern our activities, while setting out guidelines for the kind of behaviour we expect of each other. It is based on Aalto's values and establishes a common operational culture. We expect everyone to commit to its principles.

### 1.5 MATTERS OF DISQUALIFICATION

Members of committees, councils and other bodies need to fulfil the requirements set for the equal treatment of candidates.

Concerning disqualification, the Administrative Procedure Act (Hallintolaki, 434/2003) is applied. The university gives separate instructions on objectivity and impartiality in decision making.

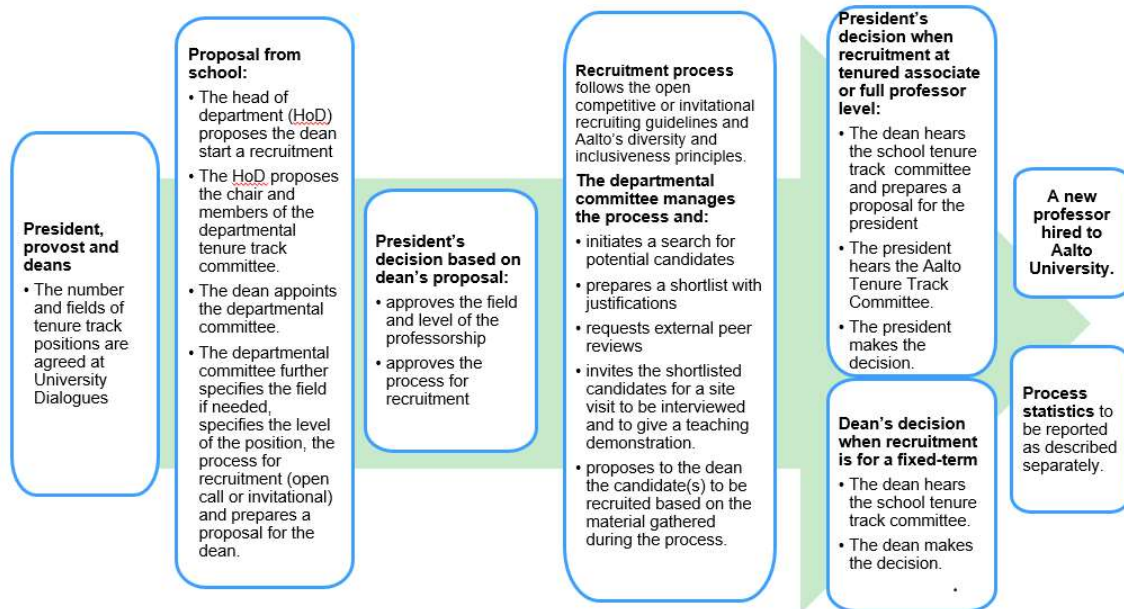
## **1.5 LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS**

Aalto University's language policies support the development of the university as an internationally esteemed university established on Finnish strengths. The current policies are set down in the Aalto University Language Guidelines. The working languages at Aalto are Finnish, Swedish and English. Aalto University's main languages of instruction are Finnish, English and in the fields of science, art, and technology also Swedish. A foreign citizen or a non-native Finnish citizen may be appointed to a teaching or a research position without demonstrating proficiency in Finnish or Swedish.

Each individual to be appointed to tenure track needs to demonstrate fluency in English, in order to be able to carry out their duties successfully. Good communication, language, and people skills are part of the pedagogical requirements for teaching.

## 2 KEY TENURE TRACK BODIES AND DECISION MAKERS

There are several bodies and decision makers in the tenure track process. Each body gives an independent opinion in accordance with the set criteria. Each body may request clarifying information or documentation related to the criteria for its decision-making purposes or return the proposal to the previous body for further elaboration.



**Figure 3.** Overview of the tenure track recruitment process at Aalto University.

### THE PRESIDENT

The president allocates tenure track positions to the schools and departments and approves the field of the position, and the level of the recruitment. The president decides whether a recruitment is made by competitive procedure (open call) or, in exceptional cases, by invitation.

The president makes the final recruitment or advancement decision when tenured positions (associate or full professor) are considered. The decision is based on a holistic assessment of merits, based on the documented evidence gathered during the process.

The president appoints the Aalto distinguished professor.

The president nominates members to the Aalto Tenure Track Committee on the proposal of the provost. The president nominates members to each school's tenure track committee on the proposal of the dean. When nominating committees, the president always considers whether there is adequate diversity of members.

### THE DEAN

The dean is responsible for recruitment processes in the school, according to Aalto guidelines. For each recruitment process, the dean nominates a departmental tenure track committee on a proposal by the head of department, and external reviewers on a proposal by the departmental committee. The dean nominates the members of the school teaching competence assessment committee. When nominating the committees, the dean always considers whether there is adequate diversity of members.



The dean cannot be a member of the committees above, but if required, the dean may exceptionally be invited to a committee meeting in the role of an expert.

The dean makes the final hiring decision for assistant professors and fixed-term associate professors, as well as advancement decisions for moving a 1<sup>st</sup> term assistant professor to the 2<sup>nd</sup> term. The decision is based on a holistic assessment of merits, based on the documented evidence gathered during the process.

The dean decides on potential extensions of the tenure clock (see Section 3.4.), after consulting the HR manager of the school.

For recruitment or advancement to tenured positions, the dean makes a proposal to the president.

## **THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

The head of department initiates the recruitment or advancement process by contacting the dean. The head also makes a recommendation to the dean on the members of the departmental tenure track committee.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES**

Human Resource Services (HRS) provides an HR expert for each tenure track committee, to act as secretary and support the committee work, including monitoring the objectivity of the assessment of candidates. The HR expert serves as the primary contact point for the candidates, including keeping the candidates updated about the status of the process.

## **EXTERNAL REVIEWERS**

External peer reviewers assess the candidate(s) in recruitments and advancements. The reviewers must be internationally known experts in the field of the position in question and impartial to the candidate(s). Typically, external reviewers should have a full professor position at a high-quality university or have comparable research or artistic merits.

The departmental tenure track committee proposes a minimum of four external reviewers to the dean, who makes the final decision on their nomination. Before the nomination of the experts by the dean, the candidates to be assessed are given an opportunity to present objections to the selection of external reviewers if they question their impartiality and feel they therefore should be disqualified (see the university's instructions related to disqualification).

### **Use of recommendation letters**

When recruiting to the level of assistant professor (terms 1 and 2), the focus in assessments is on the academic potential of the candidate. Therefore, letters of recommendation may be used instead of external reviews, if preferred. When recommendation letters are to be used, a minimum of three letters of recommendation are needed. If a recruitment is for also for tenured levels, recommendation letters cannot be used, but external reviews are used instead for all candidates in order to enable fair evaluation of all candidates. Before starting the assistant level recruitment process, the dean decides on whether recommendation letters can be used.

## **THE DEPARTMENTAL TENURE TRACK COMMITTEES**

When a position becomes available or an advancement review is required, the head of department contacts the dean and proposes members for a departmental tenure track committee (shortened to departmental committee), including proposing a chair.

The departmental committee consists typically of five to seven professors, and one supporting HR expert. The professors can be either full professors or tenured associate

professors. Fixed-term associate professors can also be members of departmental committees for the process of hiring or advancing assistant professors. It is recommended that at least one member be from outside the department, preferably from outside the school, another university, a research institute, or an equivalent organisation. Each outside member should hold a level of qualifications equivalent to those of the internal members of the committee. The HR expert acts as the secretary of the committee and does not have a vote. The chair of the committee is responsible for managing the evaluation process and preparing the proposal for recruitment or advancement according to Aalto guidelines, avoiding unnecessary delays.

If a department has several tenure track positions open at the same time, the same committee may manage recruitment processes and prepare proposals for all positions.

The proposal of the committee is collegial, either unanimous or a majority decision.

## **THE SCHOOL TEACHING COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES**

The Teaching Competence Assessment Committee (TCAC) at the school level is a fixed-term committee appointed by the dean for a period of three years. The committee consists of representatives of professors, lecturers, students, and pedagogical specialists. In recruitment and advancement processes, the TCAC acts as an independent internal evaluator and gives a statement on the candidate's teaching competence (following its own separate guidelines). The chair and at least two members must be present at a minimum, when assessing the candidate's teaching competence.

## **THE SCHOOL TENURE TRACK COMMITTEES**

The president appoints the school tenure track committee on a proposal of the dean for a period of three years. The committee considers school and/or field specific aspects, and gives recommendations to the dean on all recruitment, tenure, and advancement decisions.

The committee consists typically of five to seven tenured professors. It is recommended, that the head of TCAC be invited to the meetings when recruitments or advancements are discussed. An HR expert acts as the secretary of the committee and has no vote. Membership in the committee is limited to a maximum of three successive terms.

## **THE AALTO TENURE TRACK COMMITTEE**

The Aalto Tenure Track Committee gives a recommendation to the president on all recruitments and advancements to tenured associate and full professor levels, based on the proposal of the dean and other documentation gathered in the process. The committee also gives an opinion on whether the principles of fairness, transparency, equality, and impartiality are met appropriately in the process.

## **THE ACADEMIC CAREERS WORKING GROUP**

The role of the Academic Careers Working Group is to support the development of academic career systems and to contribute to the preparation and alignment of development actions. The group is chaired by the provost and consists of chairs of the schools' tenure track committees, chairs of the schools' teaching competence assessment committees, the schools' HR managers, and representatives of tenured professors, assistant professors, lecturers and pedagogical specialists. Representatives of professors, assistant professors, lecturers and pedagogical specialists are selected by the respective groups for a period of three years; others serve for the duration of their term of office.

## **3 TENURE TRACK RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT PROCESSES**

### **3.1 RECRUITMENT ON TENURE TRACK**

The recruitment of tenure-track faculty is made either through a competitive recruiting process or, in exceptional cases, through an invitational recruiting process. Invitational recruiting may only be used in exceptional cases for tenured associate professor or full professor positions. The president makes the decision on the recruitment process on a proposal by the dean.

Each appointment to a tenured or tenure track position is based on the assessment that the appointee is an outstanding candidate among his or her peers, demonstrating positive evidence of an international-level of excellence or a strong potential for reaching tenure according to the standards and the time frame set by Aalto University. The assessment is based on the criteria outlined in Appendix 3 of this document and any potential school-specific criteria. The assessment is carried out by both internal and external experts.

### **COMPETITIVE RECRUITING PROCESS**

The process for competitive recruitment of professors follows the steps listed below.

#### **Step 1**

When a tenure track slot is available and ready to be filled, the dean requests a proposal from the head of the department for the members and the chair of the departmental committee. The dean appoints the departmental committee and names the chair. If the recruitment level is assistant professor only, the dean also decides on whether recommendation letters can be used before starting the assistant-level recruitment process.

#### **Step 2**

The departmental committee prepares a proposal for the dean concerning the field and the level of the position (assistant, associate, or full professor). The president confirms the position and its field and level on the basis of the dean's proposal.

#### **Step 3**

The departmental committee initiates a search for potential candidates. The search follows the principles of open, global competitive recruiting (using e.g. international advertising, conferences and targeted searches), as well as Aalto's diversity and inclusiveness principles. Positions should be open for application for a minimum of 30 days.

#### **Step 4**

The departmental committee prepares a shortlist with justifications of the most promising candidates among all the applications submitted. The shortlist includes a minimum of three candidates. Departmental needs (as specified in the call for recruitment) may be taken into consideration when compiling the shortlist of candidates.

The departmental committee will provide non-disqualified tenured professors within the department (at the recruitment level or higher) with an opportunity to express an opinion on the candidates' competence for the position, and the committee will take these views into consideration when the short list is being drawn up.

#### **Step 5**

The departmental committee requests at least four impartial external peer reviews or a minimum of three recommendation letters (for assistant professor recruitments only, and if decided at initiation of the recruitment) for the shortlisted candidates.

## **Step 6**

The departmental committee invites the selected shortlisted candidates for a site visit. The candidates give a job talk, and the departmental committee interviews the candidates (regarding research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service). During the visit, candidates also give a teaching demonstration, which is a public event and part of the assessment of the teaching assessment committee of the school. For assistant professor recruitments only, the departmental committee may decide to include an assessment of teaching ability in the job talk, assessed by the departmental committee, instead of a separate teaching demonstration assessed by the teaching competence assessment committee.

In addition, all non-disqualified professors within the department are given an opportunity to talk with the candidates during the visit and their opinions are considered by the departmental committee when preparing the proposal.

## **Step 7**

**In the case of a fixed-term (tenure track) position:** The departmental committee proposes to the dean the candidate to be recruited, based on the documented evidence gathered during the process. In such fixed-term recruitments, the dean makes the recruitment decision after consulting the school's tenure track committee.

**In the case of a tenured position:** The departmental committee proposes the candidate to be recruited to the dean, based on the documented evidence gathered during the process. After consulting the school's tenure track committee, the dean makes a recruitment proposal to the president. The president makes the final decision after consulting the Aalto Tenure Track Committee.

If the departmental committee cannot find a candidate fulfilling the criteria of the position, a new call for potential candidates is initiated, possibly with newly specified field or level requirements. A change in the field or level of the position requires a new decision by the president.

If the dean does not approve the proposal of the departmental committee, the process is returned to the departmental committee. The committee may propose another candidate from the shortlist or choose to initiate a new search for potential candidates.

If the president does not approve the proposal of the dean, the process is returned to the school.

## **INVITATIONAL RECRUITING PROCESS**

The invitational recruiting process can only be used in rare cases of exceptional merit, and only for tenured associate professor or full professor levels. The process steps are similar to those in the competitive recruitment process, and a candidate goes through internal and external reviews by peers. The invitational recruiting requires that the proposed candidate be unquestionably able to fulfill the requirements of the proposed tenure track level. Initiation of invitational recruitment always requires a president's decision.

If the president does not approve the proposal of the dean, the process is returned to the school for further preparation or the process expires.

## **3.2 ADVANCING ON THE TENURE TRACK**

### **TO SECOND TERM ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

The head of department initiates the process after a discussion with the dean. The dean approves the assessment process.

The decision whether to grant the assistant professor a second term is based on an assessment of the research and/or artistic work, teaching, and impact/service of the

candidate. Each school is responsible for defining the exact criteria and procedures in accordance with Aalto's overall policy and the criteria at the Aalto tenure. The head of department is responsible for managing the review.

After hearing the tenured professors of the department, the head makes a proposal to the dean on whether to grant the assistant professor a second term. The dean consults the school's tenure track committee before making the decision. If the candidate is not granted a second term, the employment ends upon expiration of the current contract.

## **TENURE REVIEW TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**

### **Pre-requirements for tenure review**

Generally, the tenure review is started one year before the candidate's contract expires. In rare cases of exceptional merit only, the tenure review can be initiated earlier. The initiation of an early tenure review process requires a provost's decision, based on a proposal from the dean.

The tenure review is based on the criteria outlined in Appendix 3 of this document and carried out by both internal and external experts.

If a candidate has a doctoral degree (or equivalent artistic qualifications) at Aalto University or one of its predecessors, achieving tenure requires that the candidate has spent approximately one year at a minimum at another university or research institute (typically outside Finland), or has equivalent relevant research (and/or artistic/professional) or teaching experience.

## **TENURE REVIEW PROCESS**

The process for tenure review follows the steps listed below:

### **Step 1**

The tenure review process is initiated by the head of department. The head makes a proposal to the dean on the members and the chair of the departmental tenure track committee. The dean appoints the departmental committee.

### **Step 2**

The departmental committee starts the review process by requesting the candidate to provide the material specified in Appendix 3, asking the school teaching competence assessment committee to evaluate teaching competence, and inviting at least four external reviewers to conduct an evaluation of the candidate's merits. The departmental committee also consults the views of non-disqualified tenured professors within the department.

### **Step 3**

The departmental committee makes a proposal to the dean based on the external reviews and other documented evidence.

### **Step 4**

After consulting the school's tenure track committee, the dean makes a tenure proposal to the president.

### **Step 5**

The president makes the tenure decision after consulting the Aalto Tenure Track Committee.

If the president decides not to grant tenure, the president informs the candidate and the dean that the tenure review has ended. Then the employment ends upon expiration of the current contract.

## **ADVANCEMENT REVIEW TO FULL PROFESSOR**

Candidates to be advanced to full professor need to demonstrate evidence of continued excellence in research (and/or artistic work) or in teaching (and minimum high quality in the other), academic service and leadership, and contribution/impact to their field, Aalto University, and/or the broader society.

In rare cases of exceptional merit only, an advancement based on excellence in impact and/or service, with a minimum of high-quality in research/artistic work and teaching, is possible. Initiation of the process requires a decision by the provost, based on a proposal from the dean.

The evaluation follows the same process as the tenure review.

### **Pre-requirements for promotion review to full professor**

A promotion from associate professor to full professor may take place after a minimum of four years as a tenured associate professor. In rare cases of exceptional merit only, the review can be initiated earlier. The initiation of an early promotion review process requires a provost's decision, based on a proposal from the dean.

A waiting period of at least two years is required after an unsuccessful promotion review.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM A REVIEW**

A candidate may withdraw in writing from an advancement or tenure review at any point of the process. The review process will be stopped, and any fixed-term employment will end upon expiration of the contract.

## **AALTO DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR**

The honorary position of Aalto distinguished professor is the most prestigious recognition that Aalto University can give to its members. The appointment is by invitation only and the decision taken by the president.

### **3.3 PRINCIPLES ON REQUIREMENT**

All proposals, evaluations and decisions regarding recruitment and advancement on the Aalto tenure track are made through a careful consideration of each candidate's merits and future potential. Evaluation criteria on the tenure track are based on the principles of transparency and comparability with international standards. The candidate's performance is peer-evaluated from three perspectives: research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service (including activity in the scientific/artistic community, academic service and leadership, and societal impact). The requirement principles listed below describe the specific approach of the Aalto tenure track.

The criteria followed in recruitments and in tenure and advancement reviews are described in more detail in Appendix 3. The schools may complement the Aalto-level criteria with additional criteria, defined at the school level.

#### **Assistant professors**

Employment contracts for assistant professors are always fixed term. When recruiting for assistant professor (1<sup>st</sup> term), the evaluation is largely based on *potential for excellence* in research and/or artistic work and in teaching. Evaluation for second-term assistant professorship is based on *merits and potential*.

## **Tenured professors**

Employment contracts for tenured professors are always permanent. The minimum requirements for reaching tenure (i.e. the tenured associate professor level) are: excellence in research and/or artistic work, and high-quality teaching; or excellence in teaching and high quality in research and/or artistic work. In addition, merits in impact and service are considered. The weight given to impact and service merits increases in evaluations for higher tenure track levels.

In rare cases of exceptional merit only, an advancement to full professor based on excellence in impact and/or service, with a minimum of high quality both in research/artistic work and in teaching, is possible. Initiation of the process requires a decision by the provost.

### **3.4. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE TENURE CLOCK**

The tenure clock is a fixed-term period on the tenure track before getting a tenured position.

The dean may grant an extension to the tenure clock based on an application, after consulting the HR manager of the school. The tenure clock may be stopped for the time a person is released from work for reasons such as parental leave, military service, extended illness of 3 months or longer, leave for care of close relative(s), or any other reason acceptable according to university policies.

### **3.5 PROCESSING FEEDBACK**

The academic career management team, consisting of the provost, the Aalto HR director, and tenure track experts, deals with process-related feedback and proposes improvements after discussion with relevant stakeholders. Issues can also be taken to the Aalto Tenure Track Committee for discussion, as required. Any potential feedback can be sent by e-mail to [tenuretrack-feedback@aalto.fi](mailto:tenuretrack-feedback@aalto.fi).

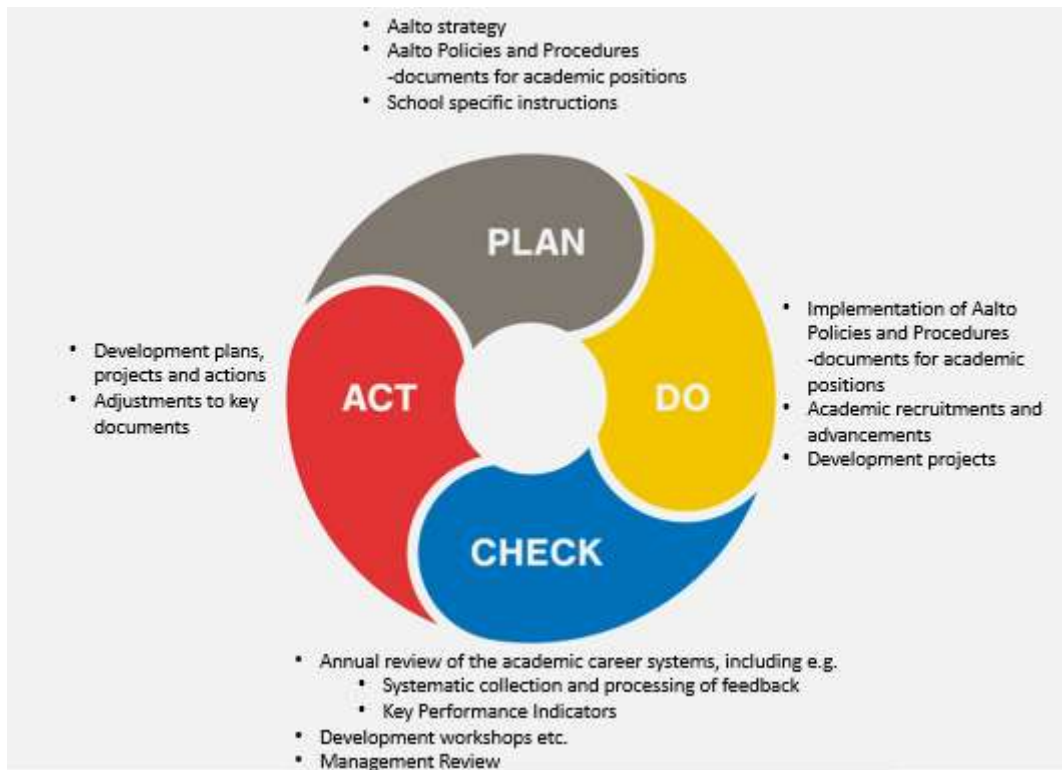
Potential biases, especially regarding advancement, are discussed and resolved with the HR manager and dean of each school. The provost will participate in the discussions, if required.

Issues concerning a specified person, liaisons between specified persons, or inappropriate behaviour, will be dealt according to the Aalto Code of Conduct procedures.

Disagreements concerning academic content are at the responsibility of the respective academic bodies.

## 4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE TENURE TRACK SYSTEM

The quality management and development of the Aalto tenure track career system is part of Aalto University's overall quality system, and based on the principle of continuous development, or the Plan, Do, Check, Act/Adjust cycle (PDCA cycle, see Figure 4). The tenure track system is reviewed regularly by the Academic Careers Working Group, in line with the university's annual clock.



**Figure 4.** Plan, Do, Check and Act/Adjust (PDCA) cycle of the tenure track at Aalto University.



# **APPENDIX 1: GENERAL POLICIES**

## **MATTERS OF DISQUALIFICATION**

Members in the committees, councils and other bodies need to fulfil the requirements set for equal treatment of candidates.

Concerning disqualification, the Administrative Procedure Act (Hallintolaki, 434/2003) is applied. The university gives separate instructions on objectivity and impartiality in decision making.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND SECRECY OBLIGATION IN TENURE TRACK REVIEWS**

Aalto University's operations are governed by the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999, hereinafter the Openness Act,). When the document has arrived at the university, an appointment decision has been made or the meeting minutes have been signed, the following information is in principle public:

- names of the applicants and applications
- names of the external reviewers
- shortlisted applicants and the general grounds for the selection
- ranking lists prepared by the external reviewers
- bibliographic analyses or the equivalent
- numeric assessments of teaching skills
- statements, merit comparisons and recruitment or advancement proposals of tenure track committees
- a recruitment, advancement or promotion decision and the general grounds for the decision

Confidential information (in the abovementioned documents or separately) may include

- the research plan, the basic materials for a dissertation or other scientific study, technological or other development project and their assessments unless it is obvious that public access will not have negative effects (Openness Act 24(1)(21))
- documents containing data on the annual income or the net worth of a person or data that otherwise describes a person's economic situation (Openness Act 24(1)(23))
- psychological or aptitude tests or similar assessments (Openness Act 24(1)(29)). The assessments of tenure track working groups, committees and external reviewers as well as verbal assessments of teaching skills may also be confidential on these grounds.
- individual letters of recommendation, if the applicant so requests. However, the name of the referee is public.
- information on a person's lifestyle, participation in voluntary associations or leisure-time activities, family life or other comparable personal circumstances (Openness Act 24(1)(32))

In principle, Aalto University does not publish documents relating to the recruitment or review, but the public documents are available by request. The applicant, however, has the right to have access to their personal data irrespective of the confidentiality provisions. If the applicant is considering legal proceedings, they may be entitled to have access to the information of other applicants as well.

In addition, the members of the tenure track working groups and committees have the right to review the necessary confidential information. In accordance with the Openness Act, the persons participating in the recruitment or review have an obligation to keep secret any information that is confidential or accessible only to a limited extent during the preparatory phase of the recruitment or review.

In addition to the Openness Act, Aalto University follows the applicable data protection legislation in the processing of personal data. The processing is described in the privacy notices regarding applicants and employees.

## APPENDIX 2: GENERIC TIME ALLOCATION FOR TENURE TRACK LEVELS

### General time allocation for tenure track professors

	Assistant professor (1)	Assistant professor (2)	Associate professor	Full professor	Aalto distinguished professor
Research/artistic and professional work	65% +/-10%	60% +/-10%	50% +/-10%	40% +/-15%	Negotiable
Teaching	30% +/-10%	30% +/-10%	30% +/-10%	30% +/-15%	30% +/-15%
Impact and service	5% +5%	10% +/-5%	20% +/-10%	30% +/-15%	Negotiable

#### Key principles

- Research emphasis high in the beginning to obtain research portfolio.
- Teaching relatively constant to maintain required teaching scale and keep senior professors in touch with students.
- Contributions to academic leadership and collaboration in the research or artistic community increase with seniority through increased leadership, committee membership and societal interaction.
- Mandatory teaching for distinguished professors, otherwise work profile negotiated.

**Figure 5.** Generic time allocation between research/artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service (i.e. activity in the scientific/artistic community, academic leadership and societal impact).

## APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION IN THE AALTO TENURE TRACK

Appendix 3 describes the prerequisites and key criteria that are used in recruitments both to tenure track and tenured positions, and in tenure and advancement reviews. In addition, schools may specify additional criteria reflecting the discipline specific requirements or established practices of their fields.

Instructions for appointment proposals and other required material are also provided here.

### ELEMENTS OF EVALUATION

**Recruitments and tenure and advancement reviews** are always based on holistic peer-evaluation, in which the evaluation criteria include the quality of research/artistic work, teaching, and impact/service. The weight of different criteria may vary at different career levels. In advancement reviews, all merits of a candidate are assessed holistically, and special attention is paid on merits achieved since recruitment or the latest review. Career breaks or tenure clock extensions are taken into account.

In terms of research and/or artistic work, excellent or high-level performance is expected at all levels of the tenure track. In terms of teaching competence, development potential is emphasized at the beginning of the career track.

**All second term assistant professors and fixed-term associate professors** will be reviewed for tenure at the end of their fixed term. Tenured associate professors may seek advancement to full professor level. Candidates to be recruited to tenured positions are evaluated using the criteria of the level in question.

Minimum requirements for reaching tenure (the tenured associate professor level) are excellence in research and/or artistic work, and high-quality teaching; or excellence in teaching and high-quality in research and/or artistic work. The candidates also need to demonstrate continued or increasing level of quality and impact since their recruitment or latest review.

In general, granting tenure requires candidates with a doctoral degree (or equivalent artistic qualifications) from Aalto University or one of its predecessors to have spent no less than approximately one year at another university or research institute (typically outside Finland) or have equivalent relevant research (and/or artistic/professional) or teaching experience.

The one-year time should contain at least one continuous visit of at least 6 months. For the remainder, also shorter periods can be taken into account, but they should be 2 months or longer. The visit(s) typically occur after the doctoral degree, but a minimum of 6 months visit during doctoral studies may also be considered as fulfilling part of the requirement.

Full professor-level promotion or recruitment requires evidence of continued excellence in research or artistic work or in teaching (and conversely, a minimum of high quality in the other). In addition, contributions to and societal impact and to academic leadership and service, are expected. In rare case of exceptional merit only, advancement to full professor based on excellence in impact and/or service, with a minimum of high-quality in research/artistic work and teaching, is possible (initiation of this process requires a decision by the provost).

In addition, all professors are expected to commit to the Aalto Code of Conduct.

## CRITERIA IN RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT REVIEWS

The candidate is evaluated from three evidence-based perspectives:

- research and/or artistic and professional work
- teaching
- impact and service (including activity in the scientific/artistic community, academic leadership and service, and societal impact)

### RESEARCH AND/OR ARTISTIC WORK

Evidence of research and/or artistic merits are demonstrated in the curriculum vitae, list of publications, and research/artistic portfolio; see detailed description below.

#### Assistant professor

When reviewing a candidate's scientific or artistic output, the following criteria are considered:

- Ability or potential to conduct independent excellent or high-quality research and/or artistic work with original ideas and impact
- Excellent or high-quality publications and/or artistic works at appropriate peer reviewed forums
- As a **merit**: capability in raising funding; demonstrating leadership in research

#### Associate professor

When reviewing a candidate's scientific or artistic output, the following criteria are considered:

- Ability to conduct independent excellent or high-quality research and/or artistic work with original ideas and increasing impact
- Excellent or high-quality publications and/or artistic works at appropriate peer reviewed forums
- Success in acquiring external funding
- Ability to build and lead a research/artistic team or research/artistic work
- Ability to supervise doctoral students and postdocs
- As a **merit**: demonstrates collaboration across disciplines

#### Full professor

When reviewing a candidate's scientific or artistic output, the following criteria are considered:

- Continued success in conducting independent excellent or high-quality research and/or artistic work with original ideas and impact
- International recognition as a scholar in the field
- Excellent or high-quality publications and/or artistic works at appropriate peer-reviewed forums
- Continued success in acquiring external funding
- Continued success to build and lead a research/artistic team or research/artistic work
- Continued success to supervise doctoral students and postdocs
- Contributions to developing the field or discipline
- As a **merit**: demonstrates collaboration across disciplines

### TEACHING

The teaching competence is demonstrated in the teaching portfolio and performance during the teaching demonstration and related interview; see detailed description below.

### **Assistant professor**

Shows ability or potential in developing as a teacher, with the following key elements being considered (see separate guidelines, available at the Aalto University website):

- Approach to teaching and learning
- Teaching experience
- Development as a teacher
- Feedback
- Ability to teach
- **Merit:** curriculum development and educational leadership

### **Associate professor**

The teaching competence needs to be assessed to be at an excellent or high quality level. When reviewing candidate's output in teaching, the following key elements are considered (see separate guidelines, available at the Aalto University website):

- Approach to teaching and learning
- Teaching experience (including supervision of students at all levels)
- Curriculum development and educational leadership
- Development as a teacher (including having 5 or more ECTS credits in pedagogical studies, or evidence of other ways of acquiring or developing knowledge in teaching and learning)
- Feedback
- Ability to teach

### **Full professor**

When reviewing a candidate's output in teaching, continued success in the following key elements are considered (see separate guidelines, available at the Aalto University website):

- Approach to teaching and learning
- Teaching experience (including supervision of students at all levels)
- Curriculum development and educational leadership
- Development as a teacher (including having 5 or more ECTS credits in pedagogical studies, or evidence of other ways of acquiring or developing knowledge in teaching and learning)
- Feedback
- Ability to teach

## **IMPACT AND SERVICE**

Evidence of impact/service merits are demonstrated in the curriculum vitae and research/artistic portfolio; see detailed description below. Scientific impact is taken into account when assessing research merits.

### **Assistant professors**

- As a **merit:** demonstrated contributions to impact and/or service

### **Associate professors**

When reviewing a candidate's merits in impact/service, the following criteria are considered:

- Outreach and dissemination of research and/or artistic work
- Contribution to development of the relevant academic field or discipline

- Participation in academic service and leadership at the university, school, and department level
- Leadership training and/or equivalent experience

### **Full professors**

When reviewing a candidate's merits in impact/service, the following criteria are considered:

- Societal contribution in the field of expertise
- Outreach and dissemination of research or artistic work
- Demonstrated contribution to the development of the relevant academic field nationally and/or internationally
- Demonstrated contribution to academic service and leadership at the university, school, and department level
- Ability to nurture a new generation of successful researchers
- Leadership training and/or equivalent experience

## **APPOINTMENT PROPOSAL – INSTRUCTIONS TO THE DEAN AND THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE**

When proposing a candidate to the president for a tenured position, the dean prepares a clear and impartial statement of the grounds of the tenure proposal, including whether the quality of the research/artistic work of the candidate is excellent or high quality, and whether the teaching competence is excellent or high quality.

The dean addresses the following issues in particular:

- the quality of the candidate's achievements regarding the three key elements of evaluation (research and/or artistic work, teaching, and impact/service)
- the views of the external peer reviewers regarding the standing of the candidate, in relation to the international level of excellence at the same career stage in the same field
- the views of the external peer reviewers on the candidate's possibility to be granted tenure in their home universities or in other high-standing international research universities
- If more detailed school-level or field-specific criteria exist, they should be clearly referred to

Note that the dean may directly refer to the proposals and recommendations of the school and the departmental tenure track committees.

The documentation provided by the dean are the following:

1. the dean's appointment proposal
2. the school-level tenure track committee's statement on the appointment (extract of the minutes)
3. the departmental tenure track committee's proposal
4. reviews of at least four external experts (if any of the reviews has been omitted, a clear justification is required for omission)
5. the review request sent to the external reviewers
6. a statement on the candidate's teaching competence by the school's teaching competence assessment committee
7. the candidate's application including attachments
8. a bibliometric analysis of the candidate's publication work by the library (if relevant)
9. in the case of a competitive recruiting process, a call for recruitment, a list of all candidates, their comparison, and the grounds for the selection of the shortlisted candidates
10. other relevant documents.

## APPLICATION AND ADVANCEMENT DOCUMENTS

All candidates are expected to follow responsible guidelines conduct of research in the application. For more information see <https://www.tenk.fi/en/tenk-guidelines>.

The candidate is required to submit the following documents when applying for a position or advancement:

- curriculum vitae
- research and/or artistic/professional work portfolio
- teaching portfolio
- references (only if specifically requested)

For recruitments, the departmental committee may specify in the call for recruitment any additional documents required.

### Curriculum vitae

A curriculum vitae (CV) provides an overview of the candidate's degrees and professional career, and academic merits or achievements, including a list of publications.

A recommended template is available from the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK), <https://www.tenk.fi/en/template-researchers-curriculum-vitae>.

### Research (or artistic/professional) work portfolio

The research/artistic or professional work portfolio is a concise (4-10 pages) self-reflection on the merits, long-term vision, and research plan of the candidate. The portfolio is narrative text, supported by fact-based evidence and includes

- The candidate's most important recent achievements/output and the strategy/goals of the research (or artistic/professional) work in the future, including
  - a brief description of the context, relevance and potential of the candidate's research results
  - how the work contributes to research (or artistic/professional) excellence and takes the field forward
  - contribution to responsible science (incl. open science and research ethics)
- Significance of the candidate's five most important publications or artistic/professional work outputs, including the candidate's contribution if co-authored/co-produced
- Reflection on how the research (or artistic/professional) work links to the Aalto University strategy (see <https://www.aalto.fi/en/strategy>)
- The envisaged societal impact of the candidate's work beyond the academic community

### Teaching portfolio

The teaching portfolio describes the candidate's experience and vision of teaching. The portfolio summarises the candidate's teaching competence, experience and education, and includes a self-assessment of teaching development during the candidate's career. The portfolio is a concise (4-10 pages) narrative text, supported by fact-based evidence, and includes the following elements

- Approach to teaching and learning
- Teaching experience (including supervision of students at all levels)
- Curriculum development and educational leadership
- Development as a teacher (including pedagogical studies)
- Feedback

More detailed guidelines for the teaching portfolio are available at the Aalto University website.



## VERSION HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENT

This policy document and related principles and procedures are subject to review. The document replaces the policies and procedures document dated March 2019.

*The present version includes, for instance, the following changes:*

- The text of the entire document has been revised, and policies and wordings have been clarified.
- In Chapter 1.1, the assistant professor 1<sup>st</sup> term and associate professor (fixed term) period lengths were updated.
- Chapter 1.4. 'The Code of Conduct' has been added.
- In Chapter 2, guidance was added related to the potential use of recommendation letters instead of external peers in the recruitment of assistant professors.
- In Chapter 2, guidance related to the responsibilities and practices of departmental committee was updated.
- In Chapter 2, the name of the Tenure Track Working Group was updated to the Academic Careers Working Group, which better reflects its activities.
- Chapter 3.2. The paragraph 'Pre-requirements for tenure review' includes updates related to the requirement for 'Aalto outside experience'.
- Chapter 3.2 includes guidelines for a new opportunity to advance to full professor based on excellence in impact and/or service.
- Chapter 3.3. was updated to 'Principles on requirement' describing the principles of evaluation at each level.
- Chapter 3.4. 'Adjustments to tenure clock' was added.
- Appendix 1. The disqualification instructions for tenure track was removed and replaced by a reference in the appendix to Aalto-level guidance on the topic.
- Appendix 3. The criteria were streamlined and clarified. The previous criterion 'service' was updated to 'impact and service' and its content was updated accordingly.
- In Appendix 3. A new paragraph for 'application and advancement documents' was added. It includes instructions on the documentation required from the candidate.

Previous versions of the document

- 5 March 2019
- 12 October 2018
- 29 February 2016
- 24 March 2014
- 19 January 2012
- 29 November 2010