

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Faculty Promotion FAQ

A comprehensive resource for faculty to access clear responses to their questions regarding the institutional promotion process

Presented by the
Office of Faculty Development
Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure Committee

This document answers all 60 questions that were submitted by Mount Sinai Faculty before and during the live panel event held in 2020.

The event recording is available on [Youtube!](#)

- Overview of faculty tracks
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Any additional questions or suggestions? Email OFD@mssm.edu

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General questions for APT process

1. What are the essential steps to initiate the promotion process?

Please refer to the summary of required documents for information about all of the steps needed.

<https://icahn.mssm.edu/about/faculty-resources/appointments/document-submission/required>

In addition, it is critical to begin the process by discussing your readiness with your division chief, site chair or department chair. Some departments have internal committees that review all of the documents before sending to the A&P committee while others may only have a review by the chair or designee.

2. After submitting the paperwork to the APT committee, how long does it take to find out?

It can be as quick as four months, and as long as 6-9 months or more. The process does not start until all materials are submitted, meaning the process does not officially begin when the applicant submitted their materials to their Chair or to the APT office. External reviewers are given 30 days to respond, at which time the Dean's Office sends a reminder, but it is not uncommon for reviewers to ask for even more time. It is also possible that the Office needs to ask departments and candidates to submit more names. It is in your best interest to carefully review external reviewer requirements and include as many names as possible on your list. In addition, considering the number of faculty at our institution, there might be a delay for the committee to start reviewing the next batch of applicants.

3. What is the rejection rate from the APT committee?

This varies across departments, but it is rare for the APT committee to reject a candidate. The committee wants faculty to succeed, and they want faculty to be at just the right point in their career by the time their application reaches the committee so that their chances of approval are very high. Some departments have their own internal pre-evaluation committee. The school's APT committee has its own ad-hoc committee to evaluate any deficiencies for those up for Associate, full Professor, or tenure. This process is designed to determine if there are any deficiencies in the candidates' work that may lead to a lack of approval, and ensuring this is the correct track of the candidate, before taking the time to seek external reviewers.

4. After a packet is reviewed by APT, does the committee provide feedback to the applicant explaining what aspects are lacking in order to be successfully promoted?

Through the pre-evaluation process at department and school levels, the committees do inform applicants if they should address any deficiencies before being appointed to the next rank. Even if the full APT committee does not completely agree that this candidate should be approved, they often table this package, inform the Chair of their concerns who then discusses with candidate to have them address whatever the perceived deficiencies were before the full APT committee comes back to the package at the next round of reviews.

5. How does an applicant with joint appointments handle promotion for each department?

It would be very unusual to be promoted in one but not the other. It is in your best interest to coordinate your promotion with both departments. One benefit is that you will only need one Chair letter signed by both Chairs.

6. Can an applicant update their CV after the promotion package has been submitted?

It depends. If the process has been delayed because of external reviewers and the committee sees that an applicant has many publications in press, they might reach out to find out how many have been published. This also applies to updating pending grants.

7. How are APT committee members accepted and how often do they change positions? What is the diversity of the committee?

APT committee member selection begins with a call from the Faculty Council for nominations/self-nominations. A council sub-committee vets applications with an eye towards selecting members who will offer diversity of departments, disciplines, tracks, MSHS work sites, gender and ethnicity. The committee also includes both tenured and untenured faculty. Candidates recommended by the Faculty Council then serve on ad-hoc APT committees to assess their interest in and fit with that work. Final appointment to the APT committee is made by the Dean of ISMMS. Members serve five year renewable terms.

8. How should candidates address clinical faculty supervisors that consider education and academic advancement beyond the scope of your clinical position?

The annual performance evaluation process is an excellent time for this kind of discussion.

9. How can candidates address potential barriers if their departmental leadership is not responsive to submitting their promotion paperwork?

If a department or division has a mentoring committee that feels the candidate is ready for promotion, the committee can advocate to the chair. Ultimately, the decision rests with the chair of the primary department.

10. Are promotion requirements any different for faculty at an affiliate hospital? If this person is a specialist, do they have to meet with the division chief at Mt. Sinai as well?

Full-time faculty employed by ISMMS, Queens or Elmhurst hospitals, or the Bronx VA will be evaluated by the standard criteria for the track that they are in. Faculty at other affiliates may be assigned to the "Affiliate Track" which has unique requirements described in the faculty handbook. The second question cannot be answered by the institution, it varies by department and division. We recommend you speak with your supervisor and/or your division chief.

11. If someone comes to Mount Sinai as an Associate Professor at mid-career from another institution, should they include teaching activities and publications from their time at the previous institution?

Yes, please include any relevant and substantial teaching activities from another institution on your CV. Your publications are an essential component for promotion, so all publications should be included.

12. Should one-time lectures be listed under teaching activities or presentation area? Should applicants include their teaching experience that occurred before coming to Mount Sinai?

The teaching grid should be focused on the routine, ongoing teaching activities. These should include current and past teaching activities. One time lectures should be listed under lectures and invited talks, just be sure to specify the audience for each lecture.

13. Regarding the new CV section to highlight diversity aspects, does diversity at Sinai only refer to racial diversity or can this be interpreted in a broader sense for gender, LGBTQ, international/multicultural experiences, etc.?

Absolutely! All aspects of fostering diversity and inclusion are positively viewed by the committee. If you review the instructions for crafting the CV in Sinai Format, it includes “efforts focused on diverse populations of women or individuals underrepresented in medicine or biomedical research.”

14. What is the best track for junior faculty whose accomplishments are mostly in the diversity space?

This is likely to depend on how the applicant spends their time (clinical, research, administrative and what types of accomplishments are most represented (grants, publications, teaching, clinical administration or program development).

COVID-19 Adjustments to APT Process

15. What policies are being implemented to handle COVID delays beyond stop the clock, which is not helpful for those who have already delayed their progress for parental leave or other reasons?

Currently, faculty on the Investigator track can submit a request for an extension on the “up or out” policy due to COVID for 1 year. There are no other policies at this time because those on other tracks do not have an up or out time requirement. [You may consider including an impact statement of COVID on your work in your application for promotion].

16. How does the APT committee account for the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on physicians scholarly activity (or lack of) this year?

The impact of the pandemic on scholarly achievement varies widely, in some cases slowing progress as physicians are recruited to fulfill urgent front-line patient care needs and in other cases accelerating publication because of the enormous amount of research stimulated by the disease, or a reduction of routine clinical activities and volume for others. We encourage candidates to include a statement about the impact of COVID on their work in the application for promotion.

17. How will the APT take into account if a candidate is unable to sit for the second part of board certification exams because of official policy from the credentialing body in light of COVID-19?

This is not an APT committee policy, so please discuss with your department.

Benefits of promotion and tenure

18. What are the benefits of advancement at each level?

Everyone likes to be recognized for the work that they've done and moving from Assistant to Associate Professor is a comment on how successful you've been. Moving up to full Professor is a very high bar in every track and represents another significant step in your career. Rising in rank confirms for you and tells your peers that you have met the expectations and done the job that you aspire to. Some departments have a salary increase with promotion. If you are a full-time faculty member promoted to Associate or Professor in any of the four tracks, you will be eligible to apply for [Grant-in-Aid](#) for your children who are enrolled in degree-granting educational programs, provided you meeting program criteria

19. Which tracks are eligible for tenure?

Tenure is available for Investigator, Clinician/Educator, and Research tracks. Considering that tenure is designed to protect academic freedom, only the Clinical Practice/Administrative Leadership track is

ineligible for tenure because this track does not require a significant amount of academic productivity. The Dean's Office encourages faculty to seek tenure when it's available, but recognize that it requires a promise that you'll continue to be productive into the foreseeable future.

20. What are the requirements for tenure?

Tenure requires sufficient evidence of your current and past productivity to demonstrate confidence in your future productivity. Tenure implies a financial investment and guarantee for the future. The committee is looking for a long and successful track record of funding to demonstrate your likelihood of sustained productivity and funding. Tenure also requires continued full-time employment, which means tenure will be revoked if you transition to part-time. Remember that external reviewers are also required for tenure approval.

21. Should applicants apply for rank and tenure at the same time?

External reviewers are required for both rank and tenure, so if you are ready for both it will be easier for referees to comment on both. When rank and tenure are proposed at the same time, the committee has separate votes for each. It is common to achieve both at the same time, but some applicants do not meet the separate requirements for tenure. In the Investigator track, tenure may be considered at the Associate or Full Professor level. For the Research and Clinician Educator tracks, tenure may best be considered at the Full Professor level, however in exception circumstances tenure in these tracks may be considered at the Associate Professor level.

22. What are the benefits of tenure?

Tenure recognizes past, current, and potential future accomplishments. Tenure was originally designed to protect academic freedom and provide security for unconventional perspectives in your field. In recent years, it doesn't provide as much financial security as one would like, but it does represent recognition by the institution that you will have a permanent role here. It's a commitment by your department to provide the minimum base salary for your rank in perpetuity, so long as you remain a full-time faculty member. In other institutions the benefit of tenure is the possibility for sabbatical time, however, Mount Sinai allows Associate and full Professors, with or without tenure, to apply for sabbatical when they have an opportunity to advance their careers doing work elsewhere.

23. Once reaching full professor, what other promotion opportunities are available?

Tenure is the next promotion opportunity for full Professors on the Investigator, Clinician/Educator, and Research tracks. The Clinical Practice/Administrative Leadership track is the only track ineligible for tenure. In addition, there may be potential opportunities for department or school leadership positions, such as Vice Chair or Assistant Dean.

24. Is rank associated with tuition benefits?

Yes, this policy is subject to change. See the current policy:

<https://icahn.mssm.edu/files/ISMMS/Assets/About%20the%20School/Faculty-Resources/Grant-In-Aid-Policy.pdf>

Compensation and funding

25. Does promotion or tenure influence salary or benefit structure?

Compensation is a decision made by departments, not the APT committee. It is common for faculty to receive salary increases when they are promoted, but it does not always go hand-in-hand. Tenure does not affect compensation at all. Benefits are not likely to change except for how a salary change may impact benefits.

26. Does each department have average base salary for clinical faculty? Can this be made accessible to support equity?

This varies by department. For example, most divisions within the Department of Medicine have minimum salaries by rank but this is not true for all divisions nor all of the departments. Please speak with your department to address this concern. Some departments and divisions have a transparent salary structure that your chair or division chief or administrator can share with you.

27. How is annual compensation determined?

The APT committee does not regulate compensation. Each department has its own compensation structure and department leadership determines if salary coincides with a promotion in rank.

28. Is R01 funding absolutely required from Assistant to Associate on the Investigator Track?

For the investigator track, R01 is the coin of the realm, but the committee recognizes that this is not something necessarily available to every investigator in every field. For the APT committee, an R01 is not an absolute requirement, but there needs to be something similar, for example, large grants from charitable organizations. Other federal funding, such as funding from the Veterans Administration and DOD are viewed favorably. The progression of extramural funding is used as a metric to show that the value of your work is evolving in a similar way to your career trajectory.

29. Is funding support connected with promotion? For example, if Instructors have grants that may expire soon, will the institution guarantee meeting their salary if their grant application is not accepted?

The APT committee cannot be involved with compensation because it does not have access to a pool of funds. The committee makes the decision that this individual is ready to advance academically, and potentially awarded tenure, but it is up to the department chairs and the individual to create a sustainability plan for their productivity and salary going forward. There is an institutional compensation plan that requires faculty to generate the income to support their salary, so the committee expects that Chairs would not submit someone for promotion if they did not have faith in the faculty members' ability to secure funding. The depletion of funding after promotion is the same problem as if funding were to deplete while staying at rank.

Clarifying scholarship expectations

30. Is research required for promotion on Clinician/Educator track?

Research is not required, but scholarly output is important. For example, running an educational program or the creation of a curriculum which has been published and/or promulgated is good evidence of scholarship. Scholarly activity is especially important when seeking Associate or full Professorship.

31. Are presentations really considered scholarly?

The advantage of peer-reviewed publications is that it gives the committee a stronger sense of the scientific or social integrity of a candidate's work. Peer-reviewed publications are the best way to demonstrate scholarship, but it is not the only way. Presentations are the next best method, but it's important that you demonstrate the impact of those presentations. Make sure your CV displays the

platform of your presentation. For example, a plenary session at an international symposium holds more weight than a lecture to medical students. The APT committee looks for invited presentations at professional societies, other academic medical centers, and important academic or scientific conferences.

32. What other activities can Clinician/Educators work on if they are not focused on peer-reviewed publications?

The committee suggests thinking about your role as a clinician, such as performance measures, becoming an expert in your discipline and developing a reputation at the various geographical levels. Outside of publications, reputation can originate from patient referrals, participation in professional societies, and membership on committees of national organizations in your field. For example, participating in committees that issue standards in your field is a great way to demonstrate excellence and reputation. Faculty should speak to their department leadership for help getting on to those committees because Chairs are typically recognized internationally, so they will have the contacts to help position you for those roles. In addition, teaching is extremely important in this track, so promulgating a curriculum that you developed is a great way to show scholarship.

33. How can a clinician-educator that teaches residents, not courses, demonstrate their accomplishments on a CV?

Many faculty who teach residents do teach particular topics in group settings, these can be highlighted in the teaching activities chart as teaching sessions, noting the topic, number of learners, frequency of sessions and evaluations if available. If a faculty member serves as a teaching attending on a service or clinic, this should also be highlighted on the CV in the teaching activities chart, if you have evaluations for your service that can be included as well. Also, any teaching awards should be included in the honors sections. In addition, clinician educators often mentor residents beyond supervising them clinically; this should be highlighted in the Trainees/mentees section. Also make sure to highlight one-time lectures in the invited presentations section and any education/residency leadership positions or service committees that you are on in those respective sections.

34. How many publications are expected for Associate Professor on the Investigator track?

There is not a quantified requirement for publications because the committee evaluates the entire package. For example, publications in Nature, Cell or the like hold more weight than lesser impact journals. The APT committee does not want faculty to slice and dice their work just so they meet X amount of publications that might be less impactful than if they were to present very important work in one high impact journal. H index and other impact measures are always considered. Keep in mind that you have the opportunity to annotate your publications on the CV to describe your particular roles on each publication.

35. How does the committee evaluate physician-scientists on the Investigator track who spend time with patients and doing research? Are they compared in the same way as someone doing 100% research and held to the same time limits?

The committee looks at the total package of each individual, no two candidates are the same. They recognize that clinicians have responsibilities to their patients and departments, so the committee is looking for a balance of research and clinical excellence. However, clinician-scientists on the investigator track are held to the same requirements for the “up-and-out” maximums: 7 years at Assistant, 9 years as Associate if untenured, and 10 years as Professor if untenured. Many faculty who hit the maximum but have not yet met the criteria for the next rank up switch into the research track if they play an important role in research projects, or the other tracks depending on the focus of their work.

36. What are the relative weights of first, middle, and last author publications?

The committee is looking to see that the traditional trajectory of academic careers is reflected by the applicants' role on their scholarly work in their field. The committee understands the value of team science, so they expect to see early career faculty as middle authors. All applicants have the opportunity to annotate their publications on their CV to explain how they played an important role in each work. As faculty gain more seniority and move towards Associate the committee is looking to see first author publications because it represents a leadership role, and for full Professor the committee expects last author publications because it represents a supervisory role.

37. Does the committee consider publications currently in press, or should they wait for those to be in print?

The committee will not accept work that has been submitted for publication but has not yet undergone peer-review. However, they will consider publications that are in press, meaning it has been reviewed, accepted for publication, but just not in print or posted online yet. Please make sure that the key publications upon which you want the committee to assess the substance of your work are available for the committee to read. If it is not available through conventional means, please include the manuscript as an addendum to your packet. They will protect the integrity of your work, but it's important that they are able to evaluate your science and its impact in the field.

Reputation and Recognition

38. Can applicants use interviews, press coverage, or social media engagement on their CV to demonstrate their scientific impact?

The APT committee accepts all forms of evidence for information dissemination. They are expecting to see traditional evidence of scholarship, especially in the Investigator track. For other tracks, the committee also accepts other examples of scholarly initiative such as the development of tools or curriculum that you disseminate through unconventional platforms. Keep in mind that the committee applies a holistic approach to evaluating every applicant, so they recommend you include anything that you do on your CV.

39. How is regional or national recognition measured?

More than anything, external referee letters support the scope of reputation. It is to your advantage that your reviewers come from far and wide. For example, letters from Utah or California supports and validates the scope of your reputation more so than New York metropolitan region. It is expected for the higher ranks to have built a reputation beyond the metropolitan region.

40. How is clinical practice excellence determined on the Practice track? RVU? Patients per hour?**Number of committees involved with? Number of leadership roles on these committees?**

The committee recognizes this is a challenging component for placing on the CV. The matrix/addendum is a place outside of the CV and Chair statement to provide the facts and figures on the scope of your practice, where your referrals come from, number of patients you see and other performance metrics relevant to your field. Also consider patient satisfaction scores and quality metrics.

41. How can a clinician gain national recognition when the scope of practice may be limited to New York due to licensing laws (i.e. inability to see patients located out of state)?

Patients may come from out of state (from the tristate area) to see you in your clinical practice even if you practice solely in NY. You may also join national organizations and be involved in national committees in your field of practice. In addition, many national committee annual meetings accept presentations in the form of clinical vignettes which offer the opportunity to present on the national stage. You may also consider crafting lectures on a topic in your expertise and find opportunities to give that talk at divisional or departmental grand rounds via networking with those in your field regionally and nationally.

42. Since reviewing papers for national journals is evidence of reputation, how can someone demonstrate this in the APT portfolio?

Reviewer activities can be listed at the end of the CV as an addendum. Leadership on an editorial board should be listed in the section labeled: "OTHER PROFESSIONAL ROLES Extramural Service: National Leadership."

43. Getting and maintaining fellow status in the colleges for multiple specialties costs a fair amount of money. Is fellow status in national specialty societies viewed more positively than simply being a member?

Maintaining this status may be desirable but is not of particular consideration by the APT committee. Evidence of tangible contributions to the work of professional societies (educational programs, participation as an author or reviewer of consensus statements, practice guidelines, care pathways, appropriate use criteria and other official documents) is of greater importance than the level of membership.

44. Does additional certification/recognition help in evaluation for promotion (for ex. FACC)?

The committee considers certification as part of their holistic look at the candidate, but does not judge candidates based on whether they do or do not have specific certification.

External reviewers

45. After achieving one promotion, can applicants use the same external reviewers several years later for their next promotion?

Yes, this is acceptable, although remember that the quantity of letters increases for rising ranks.

46. How many letters of recommendation can come from within Mount Sinai, both physically from your own site and within the Mount Sinai Health System?

This is different for each rank and track. The criteria for reviewer selection is at the top of the form that is provided to faculty. <https://icahn.mssm.edu/about/faculty-resources/appointments/document-submission> For the clinical practice track, the committee welcomes internal health system letters, but do not recommend including more than one letter from the primary institution of the candidate. Keep in mind, the clinical practice track does have a minimum requirement of external reviewers. For the other tracks, the letters should be mostly from external reviewers but it does not have to be entirely external for the lower ranks. The committee encourages you to remember that the larger geographical area of reviewer letters shows a broader impact of your work.

47. Who should be the external reviewers?

Ideally, these should be people who can speak to the quality and impact of your work. Not because they are your friend or colleague, the committee is looking for people who can speak to the field in which you are engaged. They should not be someone you have collaborated with closely within the last two years. Remember that the wider geographical range of the letters are to your benefit. Please refer to the APT website for clarification on the reviewer requirements and exclusions.

<https://icahn.mssm.edu/about/faculty-resources/appointments/document-submission>

48. What does the committee recommend for early career faculty who may not have a lot of contacts outside of Mount Sinai?

External reviewers do not need to personally know the candidate. The committee is looking for reviewers who can comment on the significance of your work. They suggest looking for people who have referenced your work, and if you reference their work, it's likely that you'll be able to build a mutually beneficial network. Other options are people who have sat on a panel with you at symposia or asking your department Chair because they have broad exposure and might be able to make suggestions or introductions.

49. If the reviewers have not worked with the candidate directly, should the candidate reach out in advance of the committee?

It is a courtesy to the reviewer but not necessary or expected, and does not guarantee this would expedite the process. When you provide a list of names, the committee might not reach out to all of them. For example, if you are up for full Professor and you provided only three names at this rank, the others at lower ranks are not eligible. It is also possible that the committee may reach out to reviewers that you did not name, using input provided by Chairs and committee members.

50. External reviewers are given 1-2 months to send their letters, but the whole process often takes 1 year or even longer. Why is there such huge discrepancy in the timelines and how does the APT committee plan to address this issue?

The committee is very interested in transparency, so they have recently launched a new tool on Sinai Central for applicants to see which stage of the process their packet is residing. The process also takes time because of pre-reviews and the substantial numbers of faculty within the health system. Concerning external reviewers, they have the right to deny to writing a letter, or may not have the time to respond with a yes or no. Please respect the confidentiality of reviewers to only write directly to the Dean's Office, and the Office is unable to disclose who has not written. However, the Office will disclose to the candidate which reviewers have been invited to ensure no clerical errors. In the event the committee comes back to you for more names, the best thing to do is provide those names quickly.

51. If the reviewer does not personally know the candidate, does this mean that the letters are expected to be brief and to the point?

The reviewer should review the candidates CV and comment on the qualities that make the candidate a good one for promotion regardless of whether they know the candidate or not.

52. How can faculty who do not have Sinai emails or access to Sinai intranet submit external reviewers?

Faculty can seek extranet access to Sinai Central from their department administrator so that they can submit all required documents through the on-line APT platform.

Time expectations at rank

53. What is the expected/average time frame to obtain promotion to the next rank?

The committee and the institution want to see every faculty member in the right track at the right rank, and they recognize this is a dynamic process which should occur at a reasonable pace. However, it is nearly impossible to quantify this metric considering the different pace for the various tracks and disciplines. Generally speaking, those who remain at a rank for many years represents a lack of initiative, either by the candidate and/or the department, to recognize that these transitions should take place. The most predictable time frame is the Investigator track because the number of years at rank is capped: no more than 7 years as Assistant, 9 years as Associate if untenured, and 10 years at full Professor if untenured. Some people on the Investigator track move faster than the capped, and those who do not meet criteria in the allotted time frame move into other tracks that are more appropriate.

54. Would it be too soon to apply for full Professorship if the candidate had achieved Associate Professor less than five years ago?

There is no minimum time at rank before moving up for any track. It is based on your contributions to the field, so if there is a long gap in scholarship, this deficiency should be addressed before applying for promotion. Conversely, there should be a substantial increase in your productivity and impact from the last promotion in order to successfully reach the next rank in a shorter-than-usual timeframe.

55. What are the actual time frames for “up and out”?

This only applies to the Investigator track. Faculty on the Investigator track can spend no more than 7 years as Assistant, 9 years as Associate if untenured, and 10 years at full Professor if untenured. If a candidate does not meet the criteria in the allotted time frame, many faculty move into the Research track if they maintain an important role in ongoing research.

56. Are physician scientists on the Investigator track held to the same up-and-out requirement, knowing that they also have clinical responsibilities?

Yes, physician-scientists on the Investigator track are held to the same up-and-out standard. The committee takes a holistic approach for every candidate and understands that no two candidates are the same. They recognize that clinicians have other responsibilities, so the committee looks for a balance of clinical excellence and traditional scholarly productivity. Keep in mind that anyone on this track who does not meet the criteria for the next rank within the allotted time frame should speak to their chair about moving into the most appropriate tracks.

57. Are the limits for “up and out” similar to other institutions?

Only the Investigator track has up-or-out restrictions. The maximum allowable time at rank in the investigator track for untenured faculty is: assistant professors – 7 years; associate professors - 9 years; professors – 10 years. Every institution has different policies, so it's difficult to compare as a group. Some are more strict and others may be more generous. The time-limits that apply to Investigator Track faculty at ISMMS are generally on par with other institutions.

Moving tracks

58. Can someone move into Investigator track?

Yes, if you meet the qualifications: independently funded research program with many scholarship outputs. The committee recommends waiting until you are ready for promotion to the next rank because there is no benefit in transitioning to a different track while staying at your current rank.

59. Can you go back and forth between tracks? For example, swapping between Clinical Practice and Clinician/Educator tracks for the years one does more education vs administration.

Yes, it is possible to have track changes in essentially any direction, although it does not happen often. This is also why Instructors are not assigned a track because the committee recognizes that junior faculty are finding themselves in their field and this provides them with the freedom to understand their future. When moving to Assistant Professor they are given a designated track that fits them best. If the situation changes, they can facilitate a track change.

60. What are the mechanisms for switching tracks?

Typically track switching becomes relevant only at the time of promotion. The chair can request and explain how the candidate fits the proposed new track as part of the statement of support.