

Home >> Code of Ethics Online >> American Historical Association

Organization: [American Historical Association](#)

Source: [CSEP Library](#)

Date Approved: December 27, 1974

**Other Version(s) in our Codes
of Ethics Online Collection:** [1990](#), [2005](#)

Disclaimer: Please note the codes in our collection might not necessarily be the most recent versions. Please contact the individual organizations or their websites to verify if a more recent or updated code of ethics is available. CSEP does not hold copyright on any of the codes of ethics in our collection. Any permission to use the codes must be sought from the individual organizations directly.

STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (1974)

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Rights of Historians proposes that the following statement of standards of academic freedom and fair professional practice be forwarded to the Council for review and adoption by the association. These standards reflect opinions and values developed by historians over a long period of time. They are supplemental to and consistent with those endorsed by the American Association of University Professors.

1.

Historical study, disciplined by methodological rigor, has traditionally been characterized by a variety of interpretations and types of inquiry. Its vitality and development have depended on continuous colloquy among historians of diverse points of view. Respect for diversity, nurtured by experience in historical study, should appear in historians' regard for one another, in the way they govern their academic departments and their professional associations, and in the criteria and practices which govern their decisions regarding members of the profession. It is expected that historians, as faculty members, will use their best efforts to meet the highest levels of the standards described below.

2.

Effective governance requires that decision-making in a department be shared. Such governance, commonly called collegial, fosters understanding, fairness, and a sense of common purpose. Many varieties of collegial government can accomplish these aims. In all of them the chairman, even when not de jure responsible to his colleagues, shares decision-making with the

because they are qualified professionals whose Judgment is needed and should be sought, although the extent of consultation may vary from issue to Issue.

3.

Primary responsibility for determining membership and status in the faculty of a college or university belongs to the faculty, departments should base recommendations for appointment, reappointment, promotion, tenure, or nonrenewal on professional criteria alone, and administrations and governing boards should override such recommendations only rarely and for compelling reasons stated in detail. When an administration or governing board disagrees with a departmental recommendation, every effort should be made to resolve the disagreement through mutual consultation. If the department's recommendation is overridden without compelling reasons stated in detail, the rights of both the department and the candidate have been violated. A department in such a position should seek a reversal, enlisting the support of the entire faculty of the institution and, if necessary, of appropriate professional associations.

Faculties should endeavor to establish in administrations and governing boards full understanding of professional values and, where satisfactory processes of appointment and review are lacking, obtain institutional adherence to the 1966 "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" (jointly formulated by the APPU, the American Council of Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges; or some acceptable approximation of that statement.

4.

Every candidate for appointment, reappointment, promotion, or tenure, and graduate students seeking positions, awards, and fellowships, should be evaluated exclusively on professional criteria, and no consideration should be given to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, beliefs, life style, or the manner of exercising civil rights except insofar as, in the interest of diversity, such attributes might be of positive professional value. Professional criteria are those appropriate and necessary to the judgment of scholarship, teaching, and service, and they include competence, integrity, and commitment to reasoned discourse.

5.

Competence in a field of historical scholarship includes, but is not limited to, mastery of the primary and secondary sources, analytical ability, methodological rigor, capacity for interpretation, originality, thoroughness, and skill in writing. Competence in teaching includes, but is not limited to, mastery of the scholarship, clarity in explanation, and the ability to stimulate students and develop their capacities for criticism and interpretation. Competence in service should be evaluated on the basis of achievement in contributions to the institution, the profession, or professionally-related public activities.

6.

Integrity in scholarship requires a readiness to follow sound method and analysis wherever they may lead, an awareness of one's own bias, and acknowledging one's debt to others. Indifference to error, or efforts to ignore or conceal it, should stand to the professional discredit of a historian. Integrity in teaching involves presenting the substance and variant interpretations of the material covered in the course with intellectual honesty, fairness in judging students' work on its academic merits alone, and readiness to discuss students' views

with open-mindedness and on their intellectual merits. Integrity in service involves the exercise of all those qualities that enable colleagues to have confidence in one another and, with mutual respect, to pursue common goals.

7.

Historical scholarship and collegiality require an open exchange of opinion and knowledge. A commitment to reasoned discourse is professionally valued because it is necessary for fruitful exchange among colleagues and between teachers and students. Such a commitment does not require "compatibility", which might be construed as requiring junior colleagues, whatever their knowledge and convictions, to be compatible with seniors on terms laid down by seniors. Nor does such a commitment preclude the expression of differences of opinion with candor, forcefulness, or persistence.

8.

The political, social, religious, and ideological beliefs of historians, when applied with professional integrity, may furnish organizing principles for scholarship and teaching. The right to hold such convictions and express them in teaching does not, however, justify the persistent intrusion of material unrelated to the subject of the or the intentional use of falsification, misrepresentation, or concealment or the abuse of academic and psychic authority to intimidate students.

9.

Intellectual pluralism strengthens the vigor and freedom of academic life. Efforts to exclude one or more political or philosophic stances from a faculty, or from one or more of its departments, tend to destroy pluralism, reduce the variety of options that emanate from intellectual convictions, and weaken the vitality of the academic enterprise.

10.

Disrupting classes, research, public lectures and discussions, or other academic activities violates the freedom of those whose teaching, discourse, and study would be affected and is not a permissible exercise of academic freedom.

11.

Historians, having the same political rights as all citizens, should, provided they do not represent themselves as spokesmen for their institutions, be free from institutional penalties or discipline for extramural political activities. Conviction for criminal activity should not be held to the professional discredit of a historian unless it clearly demonstrates unfitness for historical scholarship and teaching.

12.

As members of the academic community, historians have the right to advocate institutional change, including the right to criticize their colleagues, departments, administrative officials, and governing boards.

13.

Departments of history and institutions of higher learning should extend toleration to various life styles. Modes of dress, appearance, sexual orientation, and other features of life styles historians may choose to adopt should not affect professional evaluations. It is, however, recognized that some special-purpose institutions such as religious seminaries and military academies, because of their conceptions of their missions, restrict the range of permissible life styles. Such institutions should announce the restrictions in position descriptions published during recruiting.

14.

Freedom of teaching is essential to the task of communicating historical thought and learning and includes the following:

(1) Teachers should write the descriptions of, and share in preparing syllabi and choosing books for, the courses they teach and should have substantial latitude in realizing the objectives of such course, but they are obligated to see that their courses reasonably correspond in coverage and emphasis to the accepted or published descriptions. Where they believe these descriptions inappropriate they should seek to have them changed.

(2) Teachers should have freedom of interpretation, subject to professional standards of competence and integrity.

(3) Teachers should grade and evaluate the work of their students honestly and according to their best judgment, subject to standards determined by the faculty and the rights of students to appeal for cause and on reasonable grounds against the grade assigned, or the evaluation made. The prerogative of determining requirements for degrees belongs to the faculty, and standards for grading and evaluation, as prescribed by the faculty, constitute an aspect of these requirements.

(4) Teachers should be encouraged to explore new modes of instruction, examination, and grading, after consulting with the department or appropriate authority.

15.

Fair practice in recruitment for and appointment to departments of history requires that positions be accurately described and announced in professional publications so that all professionally qualified persons may apply. After the search has begun, descriptions should not be altered for the purpose of excluding applicants thought undesirable on non-professional grounds. Applicants should ask to be considered only for positions for which they possess the listed qualifications, and departments need acknowledge only applications from qualified applicants. In judging candidates a department should employ only professional criteria. Applicants no longer under consideration should be notified promptly to that effect. Appointment should, whenever possible, be preceded by a visit to the institution. Interviews should be marked by frankness and respect for individual dignity on both sides, and questions related to irrelevant criteria should not be raised. Procedures and standards governing graduate student awards and fellowships should conform to the criteria set fourth above.

16.

Procedures for reviewing candidates for reappointment, promotion, and tenure must provide full justice both for the candidates and for the departments and institutions involved. Candidates must be reviewed on the clear understanding that their careers are in the balance; at the same time, the welfare of the department and the institution must be respected. Decisions on personnel matters should be reached in accordance with established procedures, preferably written, known to all members of the department. Such procedures should lead to reports that are truthful, comprehensive, and consistent with the standards of academic freedom and fair professional practice. They should provide for professional review, appropriate notification, and appeal for reconsideration.

(1) Professional Review. A candidate should be judged only on professional criteria, according to clearly formulated and written standards of the department. The relative weight to be attached to scholarship, teaching, and service should be determined by the department and the institution and conveyed to the candidate before appointment. Scholarship, teaching, and service should be conscientiously evaluated by the candidate's colleagues, and the candidate should have ample opportunity to provide a record of activities and achievements, and evidence of professional merit. If no member of the department is qualified by training or scholarly experience to review the candidate's scholarship, extramural evaluation by an authority considered by all the involved parties to be disinterested and qualified should be obtained.

(2) Appropriate Notification. The department should promptly notify the candidate of its decision. Normally, the reasons should also be given. If the candidate requests to be informed in writing of the reasons for a recommendation against appointment, promotion, or award of tenure, the department should explain the possible adverse consequences of confirming the oral statement in writing. Should the candidate persist in the request for a written statement of reasons, it is recommended that written reasons be given.

(3) Appeal for Reconsideration. If the department recommends against reappointment, promotion, or award of tenure, the candidate should have an opportunity to appeal the decision on grounds of inadequate procedures, failure to exclude non-professional criteria, incompleteness of the evidence considered, or other procedural defects. If, on review, the department's procedures are found defective, it should reconsider its conclusions.

17.

The dismissal or suspension of a historian with tenure or a historian on special or probationary appointment must embody procedures of academic due process offering safeguards against injustice and unprofessional judgment equal to those set forth in the AAUP's "Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure."

Adopted December 27, 1974.

[return to top](#)

[Search CSEP](#) [Site Map](#) [Contact CSEP](#)

[SEARCH CONTENT](#) [SEARCH PEOPLE](#) [LIBRARIES](#) [SITE INDEX](#) [FEEDBACK](#) [IIT HOME](#) [EMERGENCY INFORMATION](#)

© 2008 Illinois Institute of Technology 3300 South Federal Street, Chicago, IL 60616-3793 Tel 312.567.3000