

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

Query: Board Certification for Assistant Professor

Question from Mary Moran, Drexel University (mary.moran@drexelmed.edu):

I'm writing to ask if board certification is a requirement at your school for the rank of assistant professor. At our school board certification is required for the rank of assistant professor. Faculty fresh out of residency are appointed as instructors and then advance to assistant professor when they pass their boards. Neurosurgery takes on average 3.5 – 4 years for board certification because of the requirements/process. The Chair of Neurosurgery believes that the requirement is unnecessary and a hindrance to recruitment/retention.

Responses:

From Herbert Herscowitz, Georgetown (herscowh@georgetown.edu):

At Georgetown, board certification is required for appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor in all disciplines that do not require a period of time in practice before being eligible to sit for the boards (e.g., Neurosurgery). In that discipline we allow for appointment at the rank of Assistant Professor.

From Kevin Grigsby, Penn State

At Penn State, board certification is required for appointment as Assistant Professor. Others are Instructors or Senior Instructors until board certified.

From Jennifer Allie, University of Utah (Jennifer.allie@hsc.utah.edu):

The University of Utah School of Medicine does require board certification for Assistant Professor (if it is possible to attain certification within the specialty without practice requirements). Should the specialty have practice requirements, board certification can be waived temporarily but should be attained with two rounds of eligibility. For faculty just completing residency and/or fellowship, departments should utilize the rank of instructor. Once instructors complete board certification, departments are allowed by university policy to request "expedited promotion" (no letters of recommendation or faculty vote required) to move to the Assistant Professor level.

From Laura Schweitzer, Bassett (laura.schweitzer@bassett.org):

I have grappled with this at Upstate and Louisville. We had the exact scenario you describe here for Drexel. At both institutions the down side of moving away from this standard is that it potentially allows non-boarded individuals to be tenured - a situation you want to avoid. Certainly as a quality standard, you want to encourage all of your physicians to become board certified and to assure this you do not want to tenure individuals before they are certified. Tenure review is not available for instructors and so this was a safe guard against tenuring non-boarded individuals.

We got around this in disciplines with extended board certification requirements like Neurosurgery by allowing it as an exception upon Chair's request. Appointments as assistant professors were allowed on a case by case basis in those disciplines BUT

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

1. required progress toward certification was required and tracked annually and 2. at the time of appointment or promotion to assistant professor without Boards the letter stated clearly that tenure would not be possible without board certification. You would have to ask your attorney about that, though. In the unionized environment of Upstate such a disclaimer was not possible.

All of this will lead you to discuss those individuals who can never be boarded (foreign trained physicians) but that is for another e-mail! Good luck!

From Lois Geist, UIowa (lois-geist@uiowa.edu):

We do not require board certification at the time of appointment to assistant professor.

From Glenda Cooper, UAMS (cooperglendaj@uams.edu):

Ditto: UAMS does not require board certification at the time of appointment to assistant professor.

From Susan Scott, UNM (sscott@salud.unm.edu):

We do not require board certification either. We do not promote unless it is in place.

From Steve Block, Wake Forest (stblock@wfubmc.edu):

Same at Wake Forest. However, we do expect boards' eligible faculty to become board certified in a reasonable length of time. Failure to do so may put their faculty appointment at risk.

From Barbara Ducatman, WVU (bducataman@hsc.wvu.edu):

We appoint non-certified individuals as assistant professors, have written into the offer letter that board certification is required within three years for continued employment. Most of our faculty are in the non-tenured, clinical track.

Since I'm new to this job, I don't know whether failure to certify has led to dismissal. Board-certification is required for promotion to associate professor.

We have a new problem- failure to recertify. We are trying to determine who in our faculty with time-delimited certificates has failed to recertify, how to track such individuals and what to do when they don't or can't recertify.