

## Principles for Academic Appointments – *Compilation from the Shils Report*

<https://provost.uchicago.edu/handbook/clause/shils-report-criteria-academic-appointments>

1. The existence of the university is justified if it achieves and maintains superior quality in its performance of the three major function of universities in the modern world. These functions are: (1) the discovery of important new knowledge; (2) the communication of that knowledge to students and the cultivation in them of the understanding and skills which enable them to engage in the further pursuit of knowledge; and (3) the training of students for entry into professions which require for their practice a systemic body of specialized knowledge.
2. In intellectual matters, at least, the whole amounts to more than the sum of the parts in isolation. A university faculty is not merely an assemblage of individual scientists and scholars; it must possess a corporate life and an atmosphere created by the research, teaching, and conversation of individual scientists and scholars which stimulates and sustains the work of colleagues and students at the highest possible level.
3. Research, teaching, and training are the work of individuals. These individuals depend for their effectiveness, at least in part, on the university's provision of material and administrative services which enable their work to go on; they depend also on the maintenance in the university of an atmosphere of stimulation, tolerance, and critical openness to new ideas.
4. The function of appointive bodies is to bring to the academic staff of the university individuals who will perform at the highest level the functions of research, teaching, and training and the maintenance of the intellectual community of the university.
5. A university which does not perform at this level will lose its standing in the world and therewith its power to attract outstanding faculty members and outstanding students.
6. Its failure to attract them will in turn reduce the quality of its performance. Every appointment of a mediocre candidate makes it more difficult to bring outstanding students to the university. This is why scrupulous insistence on the most demanding criteria in the act of appointment is so decisive for the university.
7. The conception of the proper tasks of the university determines the criteria which should govern the appointment, retention, and promotion of members of the academic staff. The criteria which are to be applied in the case of appointment to the university should, therefore, be criteria which give preference above all to actual and prospective scholarly and scientific accomplishment of the highest order, actual and prospective teaching accomplishment of the highest order, and actual and prospective contribution to the intellectual quality of the university through critical stimulation of others within the university to produce work of the highest quality.

8. The university should not aim to be a pantheon of dead or dying gods. Appointments to the university should not be made solely on the basis of past achievements but only to the degree that past achievements promise future achievement.
9. In the performance of its functions in research and in professional training, it becomes necessary to appoint supporting staff who are indispensable to the performance of these functions but who are not qualified for appointment to the university faculty. This raises serious problems for the university in its effort to keep to its major tasks at the level its traditions and aspirations demand.
10. Any appointive body must have a standard by which it assesses the merits of the alternative candidates before it. Academic appointive bodies must have clearly perceived standards which they seek to apply to particular cases. They must seek to choose candidates who can conform most closely with these standards in their most exigent application.
11. The standards to be applied by any appointive body should be those which assess the quality of performance in (1) research; (2) teaching and training, including the supervision of graduate students; (3) contribution to intellectual community; and (4) services. Distinguished performance in any one of these categories does not automatically entail distinguished performance in the others.
12. No decisions to appoint, retain, or promote between grades should under any circumstances be regarded as “automatic.”
13. There must be no considerations of sex, ethnic or national characteristics, or political or religious beliefs or affiliations in any decision regarding appointment, promotion, or reappointment at any level of the academic staff.
14. Particular care must be taken to keep “inbreeding” at a minimum.
15. Decisions regarding retention or promotion must deliberately eschew considerations of convenience, friendship, or congeniality. No decision to retain or promote should permit the entry of considerations of the avoidance of hardship which might confront the candidate if a favorable decision is not made. Similarly, favorable decisions to retain or promote should not be rendered on the grounds that evidence is not sufficient for a negative or positive estimate of future accomplishment. The insufficiency of such evidence is in such cases indicative of the candidate’s insufficient productivity.
16. There has for some years been an increasing tendency for universities to concern themselves in their teaching and research with contemporary events – especially in the social sciences and humanities – and it is perfectly understandable that this should occur.
17. With this focus of attention, however, there has also been a corresponding tendency to regard participants in the contemporary events as qualified to become academic

staff members on the ground that their presence in the university will bring to the university the immediate experience of these events.

18. Appointive bodies must remember that universities are, insofar as their major intellectual functions are concerned, places for scientific and scholarly analysis and training in such analysis, not theaters for the acquisition of vicarious experiences.
19. The criteria of appointment are implicit in the definition of the aims of the university. This means that appointive bodies must seek to recruit to its staff and retain on its staff persons whose accomplishments and potentialities are adjudged to be of the very highest order in research and in teaching and in the creation of an intellectual environment in which research of the highest order is done and in which students of distinguished intellectual potentiality are formed and guided.

[specific procedures and standards deleted here]

**SOURCE:** <https://provost.uchicago.edu/handbook/clause/shils-report-criteria-academic-appointments>, sometimes referred to as the Shils Report

**OTHER PARTS** of the Chicago Trifecta can be found here:

- **Principles for Freedom of Expression**,  
<https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>, sometimes referred to as the Chicago Principles
- **University's Role in Political and Social Action**,  
<https://provost.uchicago.edu/reports/report-universitys-role-political-and-social-action>, sometimes referred to as the Kalven Report