

Perspectives from the Third Year of Teaching
AALS Workshop for New Law Teachers
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Congratulations and welcome to a wonderful new profession!

My suggestions focus on three areas: (1) expectations and politics, (2) scholarship, (3) teaching, and (4) service.

Expectations & Politics

1. Obtain written confirmation of your institution's expectations for your course package and other negotiated benefits in writing.
 - a. This is particularly important if you have agreed to teach a course on a temporary basis – make sure that the terms of how long you will teach the course are clear.
2. Always remember that you are being evaluated at all times.
3. Obtain honest feedback on how vocal your faculty expects junior faculty to be at faculty meetings, particularly when appointments candidates are being considered. Approach your votes on faculty candidates thoughtfully. Tenured candidates will have the opportunity to vote on your tenure if they join your faculty.
4. After obtaining your promotion and tenure standards in writing, if possible, obtain copies of the tenure files for the last couple of people who received tenure. Find out from tenured colleagues whether the promotion and tenure standards accurately reflect expectations or if they are a minimum that is customarily exceeded.
5. Participate in faculty colloquia by asking a question of visiting speakers. Contributing to the intellectual life of the university is part of your professional responsibility.

Scholarship

6. When it is time for your promotion or tenure, you are likely to be asked to provide a list of scholars in your field who can review your work. Therefore, begin developing contacts at other institutions who are willing to review your drafts and be supportive of your work, including attending and speaking at conferences where you can meet other scholars in your field.
 - a. Be responsive to their comments by either responding to their suggestions in your paper or explaining why you chose not to accept them.

7. When asked for a list of scholars who can review your work, if you have to recommend people you do not know well, do some research into their work and them as a person. Are they the type to be critical or negative in a review letter?
8. Research assistants can help you begin a new project while you are working on your current article.
 - a. If your allocation of hours permits it, you may want to keep one available for current projects and one for future projects.
 - b. Be sure to manage them well by checking in with them at regular intervals.
9. Require law reviews who accept your articles to notify you of all changes.

Teaching

10. Once you receive your first set of teaching evaluations, seek advice from some trusted colleagues about how to address any concerns raised. Visit colleagues' classes who are particularly well respected for their teaching ability and seek advice from colleagues who visit your class. Be responsive to any constructive concerns by adjusting your teaching each year.
11. If you teach a first year class, consider giving a brief explanation of the style that you use and why you use it, particularly if you use the Socratic method. This will help your students understand the learning process.
12. Do not be afraid to have fun with the class and try something new, particularly if you are covering dull material.
13. Seek advice from a colleague who taught your course or a similar course when writing your exam. Determine how you will grade your exam as you are writing it, including preparing your grade sheet. This can help you identify problems with the question that you have written.
14. Give yourself as much time as possible when grading your first set of exams. Do not plan any big trips or events over the holidays for your first year. The process is time consuming and can take far longer than you anticipate.

Service

15. While you should try to avoid serving on a time-consuming committee your first year, if you will be expected to serve on a committee with a heavy workload before you go up for tenure, you should offer to serve on that committee fairly early in your career, such as in your third year. This could save you from being asked to serve on a committee just prior to going up for tenure when you need to concentrate on your writing.

Best wishes and have fun!