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Guidelines for the Assistant Professor System at ETH Zurich, as issued by the President

(of February 1, 2015)

The President of ETH Zurich issues,

based on art. 2 par. 2 of the Ordinance of the ETH Board on the Faculty of the Federal Institutes of Technology ('Professorenverordnung ETH') of September 18, 2003¹ and art. 7 par. 2 of the Ordinance on the Organization of ETH Zurich ('Organisationsverordnung ETH Zürich') of December 16, 2003²,

the following guidelines:

1. PARAGRAPH: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1 Principles

¹ At ETH Zurich, positions at the assistant professor level are aimed at promoting the careers of young professors and at giving them the opportunity to gain further scientific qualifications in view of an academic career. Duties in teaching and academic services need to be adjusted to this goal so that the assistant professor has sufficient time to do research.

² Like associate and full professors, assistant professors are granted complete freedom of research and teaching as well as their own financial means.

Article 2 Appointment and funding

¹ Assistant professorships can be filled as follows:

- a) Appointment with tenure track
Assistant professorships with tenure track³ are rooted in the professorship planning of ETH Zurich. Their funding has to be assured in the long term within the framework of the financial planning of the department.
- b) Appointment without tenure track
Generally, assistant professorships without tenure track are financed with ETH-budget funds or with third-party funds (e.g. SNSF Professorships, ERC Starting Grants, industry funds). They are included in the professorship planning of ETH Zurich if possible.

² The total expenditure for assistant professorships financed with ETH-budget funds are accounted for in the financial planning of the departments.

Article 3 Nomination and employment

¹ All assistant professors (with or without tenure track) are appointed by the ETH Board. The final decision, whether to submit a particular proposal to the ETH Board, lies with the President of ETH Zurich for all assistant professorships (with or without tenure track).

² The duration of the temporary employment of the assistant professor (with and without tenure track) may not exceed eight years. The only exception is in the case of maternity leave, a renewal of one year per child will be permitted.⁴

¹ SR 172.220.113.40

² RSETHZ 201021 (available in German only)

³ According to art. 10 par. 1 of the *Professorenverordnung ETH*

³ Generally, assistant professors cannot be employed as scientists without the rank of a professor directly after the termination of their work contract at ETH Zurich.

2. PARAGRAPH: RECRUITING PROCESS

Article 4

¹ The recruiting process for assistant professors with and without tenure track is the same as the recruiting process for associate and full professors⁵, with the exception of SNSF Professorships and assistant professorships financed with ERC funds, where the SNSF or ERC conduct the evaluation, respectively.

² The President decides whether to advertise a particular assistant professorship, with the exception of SNSF Professorships and assistant professorships financed with ERC funds.

³ The advertisement is based on a profile paper, which the department concerned submits to the President. This paper contains the following items⁶:

- a) description of the teaching area (incl. reference to the incorporation of the position into the course(s) of studies as well as information on the expected teaching load);
- b) description of the research area (incl. scientific relevance and integration into the institute, the department, and ETH Zurich);
- c) list of centers and people of excellence in the field with a particular emphasis on female individuals, who could be taken into consideration as potential candidates or as quality benchmarks in the field;
- d) concept for the endowment of the assistant professorship, especially regarding funds and space, including information on their source and availability;
- e) suggestions for the composition of the faculty recruiting committee;
- f) draft version of the text of the advertisement in English, and, where appropriate, in German, French or Italian; and
- g) list of journals for the publication of the advertisement.

3. PARAGRAPH: ASSISTANT PROFESSORSHIPS WITH TENURE TRACK

Article 5 Principles

¹ The appointment of assistant professors with tenure track is rather selective, equal to the one of associate and full professors. Upon taking office, the assistant professors⁷ receive optimal development opportunities. For one tenure vacancy (with financial resources already secured), not more than one assistant professor is appointed.

² Among the main duties of a department is the integration and evaluation of assistant professors, as well as the appointment of new professors.

³ All associate and full professors are responsible for the evaluation of assistant professors.

⁴ The support of the department includes especially

- a) the integration into the department;
- b) efficient mentoring;
- c) timely, regular and complete feedback concerning the performance.

⁴ According to art. 9 par. 2 of the *Professorenverordnung ETH*

⁵ See http://www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch/berufungen/index_EN

⁶ See http://www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch/berufungen/Checkliste_Profilpapier.pdf (in German only)

⁷ Unless otherwise explicitly stated, this paragraph only refers to assistant professors with tenure track.

Article 6 Integration and mentoring

- ¹ Each department ensures actively that new assistant professors are swiftly integrated into the department. This includes particularly
- a) the appropriate introduction of the assistant professors at departmental and professorial conferences;
 - b) encouraging the assistant professors to actively initiate meetings with (all) colleagues;
 - c) a good involvement in teaching.
- ² Each assistant professor is designated a mentor. Especially in the beginning, the mentor has to hold frequent meetings with the assistant professor and act as the contact person for questions and issues. There are various possible models: the mentor is the Head of the Institute, a colleague from within or outside the related field, there are two mentors (from within and outside the related field), etc. This choice is the department's responsibility. The Office for Faculty Affairs has to be informed of the mentor's name when the assistant professor takes office.
- ³ Each department issues transparent guidelines as regards the teaching load of assistant professors. Notably, this teaching load must not be excessive. The recommended level of an average teaching load is approximately 50% of the one of an associate or full professor.
- ⁴ Each department is obliged to write down and disclose the practiced implementation.

Article 7 General regulations of the tenure procedure

- ¹ The tenure procedure is a multi-stage procedure during which the qualifications of the assistant professor are examined in view of a permanent professorship.
- ² The President establishes a Tenure Committee, to advise him/her on the assessment of the department's requests for tenure. One of the Tenure Committee's main task is to help ensure the quality standards of ETH Zurich. The formulation of statutes is governed by the Tenure Committee.
- ³ The decision on the initiation of a tenure procedure on the university level is made by the respective department, and is subject to the assistant professor's achievements.
- ⁴ The final decision on whether a request is submitted to the ETH Board is made by the President.

Article 8 Tenure procedure on the departmental level

- ¹ Initially, assistant professors are appointed for a four-year term⁸. The reappointment depends on the result of the second evaluation (see below).
- ² Each assistant professor is usually evaluated three times. In general, the following tenure clock pertains:
- a) first evaluation after 1.5 years;
 - b) second evaluation after 3 years;
 - c) third evaluation after 5 years;
 - d) The department files a request to the President for the initiation of a tenure procedure according to art. 9 after a maximum of 5.5 years (in case of success, the assistant professor is promoted to associate professor after approximately 6 years).
- ³ The department's request for initiation of the tenure procedure according to art. 9 implies the presence of at least six letters of reference from internationally recognized experts in the specific field. Those letters of reference are to be treated confidentially.
- ⁴ The second evaluation forms the basis for the continuation of the tenure process and the department's request for reappointment for the attention of the President. The appertaining evaluation report contains a consideration of the probability of a successful tenure procedure. In the

⁸ According to art. 9 par. 2 of the *Professorenverordnung ETH*

case of a positive decision, the assistant professor is reappointed for three years; otherwise, the tenure procedure is completed at this point. The assistant professor is then being reappointed (for the last time) for one more year. No letters of reference are obtained in unequivocally negative cases from the department's standpoint. However, the assistant professor has the right to ask for (at least six) letters of reference. The same holds true for the third evaluation.

- ⁵ The result of the third evaluation forms the basis for a potential request by the department for the initiation of the tenure procedure according to art. 9. In specific cases, i.e. if the assistant professor has already obtained the scientific qualification, this application may also be requested after an earlier evaluation. This may especially be the case for assistant professors who already have considerable experience and a corresponding portfolio when taking up office.
- ⁶ If a candidate has an appointment offer by a renowned university for a position comparable to a permanent professorship at ETH Zurich, the tenure procedure can also be initiated earlier or be accelerated, if necessary.
- ⁷ In exceptional cases, the tenure clock may be suspended for one year. Examples of reasons for prolongation can be plausible loss of time due to system-intensive research, interdisciplinary research or personal reasons (such as parenthood). The department files a request for prolongation of the tenure clock for the attention of the President. In case of approval, the following evaluation timeframes are adapted accordingly. A prolongation has no disadvantageous consequences for the assistant professor.
- ⁸ In case the President or the department render a negative tenure decision, the assistant professor is granted the right to remain in the same working position for another year. However, the maximum duration of eight years may not be exceeded.
- ⁹ Every evaluation is headed by a chair (associate or full professor). He/she organizes and leads the entire evaluation and prepares the evaluation report with the feedbacks from the other associate and full professors of the department.
- ¹⁰ The basis for the evaluation is the tenure dossier according to art. 11 provided by the assistant professor. It comprises all documents that also have to be made available for the ETH-wide Tenure Committee. The dossier is discussed at a special meeting by the associate and full professors of the department. Usually, this meeting includes a presentation by the assistant professor with a following Q & A session as well as a discussion without the assistant professor. During the latter, each participant may pronounce his/her opinion. The evaluation report bases on this discussion and contains essential minority views, which have to be marked as such. The report is signed at least by all associate and full professors present at the evaluation.
- ¹¹ The evaluation chair meets the assistant professor to discuss the evaluation report. The assistant professor may add to the document and possible feedback and opinions of the assistant professor are taken into consideration when finalizing the evaluation report.
- ¹² The individual evaluations demand a 50% attendance quorum. The mentor and the Head of the Department or his/her representative must attend all evaluations. The request for initiation of the tenure procedure according to art. 9 requires a two-thirds-majority at a conference of the associate and full professors of the department with a two-thirds-attendance and resolution quorum. The same holds true for the proposal for reappointment and continuation of the tenure process according to art. 8 par. 4, respectively.
- ¹³ The detailed implementation of the tenure process is the department's responsibility. However, it must be documented in writing, disclosed in the sense of utmost transparency and presented to the assistant professor. Possible implementation models are:
- a) The responsibility for the lead during the evaluation rests on a small departmental tenure committee. The committee members take turns acting as chair.
 - b) The dossier may be extended by means of letters of reference and expert assessments asked for by the evaluation chair during the first and/or second evaluation as well.

Article 9 Tenure procedure on the university level

On the university level, the tenure procedure is structured as follows:

- a) At the latest 18 months prior to the termination of the assistant professor's work contract with the ETH Board, the conference of the full and associate professors decides to reject or forward the request for initiation of the tenure procedure to the President.
- b) If the request is rejected by the department, the President has to receive a written justification and the decision has to be communicated to the assistant professor by the Head of the Department in an appropriate manner.
- c) In case the request is approved by the department, the tenure dossier is forwarded to the President. The Head of the Department together with the mentor write an accompanying letter, where they detail the aspects leading to the positive decision as well as the result of the voting procedure, explain the position of the professorship within the strategic planning of the department and ETH Zurich, and formulate a concept for the endowment of the professorship. In particular, the essential minority views have to be commented on as well as the statements made by the referees and their status in the corresponding field. Any relations between the assistant professor or other members of the department and the referees are to be revealed. The letters of reference have to be disclosed to the Tenure Committee.
- d) The President submits the request to the Tenure Committee for examination.
- e) At this stage of the procedure, the assistant professor gives a public presentation.
- f) Generally no later than half a year after receiving the request from the department, the Tenure Committee submits its recommendation for promotion of the assistant professor to associate professor to the President.
- g) The President makes his/her decision after a hearing with the Head of the Tenure Committee, which takes place before the beginning of the seventh year in office at the latest.
- h) If his/her decision is positive, the President enters into negotiations with the assistant professor; once those negotiations are successfully concluded, the President recommends the assistant professor for appointment to the ETH Board.
- i) A negative decision has to be communicated to the assistant professor by the President in an appropriate manner.

Article 10 Evaluation criteria

For all evaluation levels, the following criteria are implemented:

- a) scientific activities in the academic or industrial context and their reflection in the publication record, scientific presentations and patents;
- b) teaching activities and their evaluation (teaching portfolio; incl. student's evaluation);
- c) supervision of term papers, diploma and doctoral students;
- d) acquisition of research funds;
- e) activities abroad and international contacts;
- f) services for the academic community; and
- g) academic and societal relevance and potential of activities, also in relation to the strategic guidelines of the department and ETH Zurich.

Article 11 Application dossier for tenure candidates

The tenure dossier contains the following elements:

- a) curriculum vitae;
- b) list of publications (incl. information on the five principal publications);
- c) list of talks;
- d) list of lectures;
- e) results of the teaching evaluation, further comments on teaching (if available);
- f) list of diploma and doctoral students, including their present positions;
- g) acquisition of research funds;
- h) list of services for the academic community;
- i) copies of the evaluation reports;
- j) commented suggestions for at least five referees;

- k) comments on future research and teaching activities in the case of promotion to a permanent position.

4. PARAGRAPH: ASSISTANT PROFESSORSHIPS WITHOUT TENURE TRACK

Article 12

¹ The regulations regarding the appointment, integration, mentoring and teaching for assistant professors without tenure track⁹ is equal to the one of assistant professors with tenure track. The corresponding rules as regards evaluation apply correspondingly. Assistant professors without tenure track are entitled to three evaluations as well. As it is true for assistant professors with tenure track, the evaluation's responsibility lies with all associate and full professors of the department. Letters of reference are not necessary.

² Just like assistant professors with tenure track, assistant professors without tenure track are appointed for initially four years. As regards reappointment, the following variations apply:

- a) Assistant professors without tenure track financed by ETH-budget funds are usually reappointed for a period of two years.
- b) Assistant professors without tenure track financed by ERC funds are usually reappointed for a period of one year.
- c) Assistant professors without tenure track financed by SNSF funds are usually reappointed for a period of two years.

The reappointment in c) depends on whether the SNSF prolongs the funding. In case of a negative request for funding from the SNSF, the reappointment is ensured for one year.

Upon request by the department, longer reappointments are possible based on justified reasons, for example for three years in c) or two years in b), provided that the funding is secured.

³ Changing an assistant professorship without tenure track into one with tenure track is usually impossible. Assistant professors without tenure track may apply, however, for a vacant professorship at ETH Zurich like any external candidate.

5. PARAGRAPH: AGE LIMITS

Article 13

¹ Basically, ETH Zurich's goal is to appoint young assistant professors with great potential. As a general rule, assistant professors should not be older than 35 at the time of their appointment.

² This age limit maybe increased due to special reasons which led to a career slowdown. Namely:

- a) relevant industrial experience;
- b) career slowdown due to parenthood;
- c) prolonged military service.

³ Extraordinarily qualified candidates who are 36 or 37 years old at the moment of their appointment and cannot refer to the reasons stated above may, in rare and exceptional cases, be appointed to an assistant professorship with tenure track or to an assistant professorships without tenure track funded by ETH Zurich. These cases imply that the career must be at an accordingly advanced stage and the employment's duration is shortened.

The tenure process is adapted as follows for assistant professors with tenure track:

- a) There are only two evaluations; one after 1.5 years and one after 3 years. The final decision on the departmental level is made after the second evaluation.
- b) Extension of the tenure process is only possible in case of family reasons.

⁹ Assistant professors with tenure track who also benefit from ERC or SNSF funds are not considered assistant professors without tenure track.

Assistant professors without tenure track who are funded by ETH Zurich are to be evaluated only twice as well. The first evaluation takes place after 1.5 years, the second one after 3 years. Reappointment is usually impossible.

It must be ensured that younger applicants are not disadvantaged when selecting such an assistant professor. In case of equal qualification, the younger candidate is to be favored.

6. PARAGRAPH: INTERIM REGULATIONS AND EFFECTIVE DATE

Article 14 Interim regulations

The new tenure clock according to art. 8 is valid for tenure track assistant professors who take office starting February 1, 2015. Tenure track assistant professors who took office at an earlier date abide by the previous regulations regarding timetables.

Article 15 Effective date

These guidelines at hand become effective as of February 1, 2015. They replace the guidelines of November 1, 2010.

THE PRESIDENT OF ETH ZURICH
(Prof. Dr. L. Guzzella)