



Revisions to the Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Policy AC23 for 2021-2022

Changes to the Administrative Guidelines

- **II. C. 2. (Page 6) – *COVID-19 Impacts on Teaching***
 - Updated “Summary of COVID-19 Impacts on Teaching” to clearly outline each semester since spring/summer 2020.
 - Updated Appendix “M” for recommended alternatives to document teaching activities.
- **III. (Pages 8-13) – Clarifying language has been added regarding the responsibility of dossier preparations, length of the narrative, and changes or new information added to the dossier.**
- **V. (Page 20) – *Process of Review***
 - Included a new section for the process of review for promotion and tenure committees.
- **VI. (Pages 26-27) – Modified the existing language in external letter requests that pertains to stays to include the extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19.**
- **Appendix A (Pages 28-31) – Updated and new language in regard to Student Evaluations.**
- **Appendix B (Pages 35-36) – *Timetable for 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Reviews*, the following is updated.**
 - Updated the Timetable for 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Reviews.
- **Appendix C (Pages 37-40) – Sample Letters to External Evaluator have been updated as of April 6, 2021**
- **Appendix F (Page 46) – *Dossier Dividers and Forms*, it is noted that the following fields and dossier dividers have been revised.**
 - Promotion and Tenure Form
 - Two areas have had font size corrected and larger text boxes added
 - Biographical Data for Promotion/Tenure Review Form
 - Larger text boxes have been added
 - Budget Form has been removed
- **Appendix M (Pages 67-69) – updated “Options for Alternative Assessment”**

Additions and Changes to the FAQs (Nos. 3, 8, 16, 17, 26, 46, and 62-72)

- **FAQ #3.** Added language clarifying responsibility of dossier preparations.
 - That responsibility is assigned to the department head (or director of academic affairs or division head), **and** the faculty member must cooperate by assembling whatever materials are in his or her possession by the timeline given by the department head. **If the unit is using Activity Insight to generate the dossier, faculty members are responsible for ensuring their information is entered into Activity Insight in accordance with the timeline specified.**

- **FAQ #8** clarifying language was added regarding withdrawal of a dossier

Can a dossier be withdrawn after it has been sent forward for review?

Once a dossier has been completed and the candidate has signed that they reviewed it, and the peer review committee begins its review, the formal process has begun. However, if it is a promotion review only, and if the peer review committee does not recommend promotion and the department head agrees, **after consulting with the dean of the academic unit** the head should discuss with the candidate the advisability of withdrawing the dossier from further consultation.

- **FAQ #16** added a charge to a promotion and tenure committee

What are the key elements of the charge to a committee?

Please see the Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees on the VPFA website (vpfa.psu.edu)

- **FAQ #17** added language to indicate when it is appropriate for a committee member to abstain from voting.

When is it appropriate for a committee member to abstain from voting on a candidate who is under review for promotion and/or tenure?

Committee members should **recuse** only when there is a legitimate conflict of interest, such as a relative being considered for promotion or tenure or if there was significant collaboration with the candidate. **Members are encouraged to disclose possible conflicts of interest to the unit head and seek consultation about how to best manage the conflict. Conflicts of interest should be declared prior to the discussion of any candidate and members will be recused from the discussion and voting.**

- **FAQ #26** added a question for best practices for committees to meet virtually.

What are best practice guidelines for committees that meet virtually?

Prior to the committee's first meeting, committee members must determine whether to meet in-person or virtually for all of the committee's meetings that involve discussions about

candidates. Promotion and Tenure committees may not meet via a hybrid approach (i.e., with some members in person and some virtual). (V.E.1) unless granted an exception by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Committees that decide to meet virtually must attend to security considerations to ensure confidentiality of discussions and voting. The committee chair should discuss the virtual process prior to the first meeting (how entry and exit are managed, how voting will proceed, and confidentiality considerations). It is not permitted to record meetings. Meetings should have a waiting room; the committee chair should check attendees into the meeting. All participants should authenticate their identity, either by enabling their video or providing the phone number from which they will be calling in advance of the meeting. Participants should attend the meeting from a location where others are not present and be prepared for unlikely scenarios such as Zoom crashing, chair or participants losing connection, etc. In cases of conflicts of interest, attendees must be checked out of meeting and checked back in. Documents should be available in a secure platform. For committees that vote by secret ballot, a method must be constructed to collect votes for each case under consideration. No discussion about candidates may occur via email and only those present for the discussion of a candidate may vote on a candidate.

- **FAQ #46** added language for clarity of when the Immediate Tenure process should begin.

What then are the expectations for immediate tenure?

Immediate tenure reviews are appropriate for persons being considered for faculty or academic administrative positions at the University. The immediate tenure process is not appropriate for faculty members or academic administrators already under contract. Immediate tenure may be granted to new faculty appointments, almost always when they have a tenured appointment at the institution they are leaving. **The immediate tenure process must begin prior to the candidate's start date.** Since we assume that they are being hired because they increase the excellence of the department, and that they are being recruited in a competitive market, we do not ask departments to slow the negotiations process by asking such faculty to develop full Penn State dossiers. They must, however, go through the full Penn State process, with the usual letters from the usual committees and administrators. In regard to external letters, while letters of reference used in the search process may be utilized, all four external letters must address the candidate's qualifications for tenure. Administrators are expected to consult with the chair of the unit's promotion and tenure committee to make the determination of whether the reference letters sufficiently address the criteria for tenure. If not, the college will have to request additional external letters. In addition, there needs to be evidence of good teaching before any new faculty member is granted tenure, such as a summary of student peer evaluations. What is presented for review is the candidate's vitae, four external letters, and evidence of good teaching, to which will be added in the review process the normal administrative and committee letters. The formal signatory page and dividers used in the standard promotion and tenure dossiers should not be used for immediate tenure cases. (Pages 55-57, Appendix I) The "out-of-sequence" process or a hybrid of the immediate tenure and the out-of-sequence processes should be utilized when there is a desire to hire individuals who do not currently have tenure at their home institution. Because out-of-sequence requests for promotion and tenure reviews will not be handled by the immediate tenure review process, please contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs to initiate this process.

- **FAQ #64, #66, #67, #69, #70, and #72** updated questions and answers to reflect adjustments due to COVID-19

FAQ #64 Will the extension of the review period due to COVID-19 be mentioned in requests to reviewers?

While the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 is not a stay, the language pertaining to stays in request letters to external reviewers will be modified for those who were in the probationary period in calendar year 2020. This change will be implemented beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year as no one going up for promotion or tenure in fall 2020 confirmed the extension. The “Sample Letters to External Evaluators” was update with new language as of April 6, 2021 and will be maintained until there are no longer any candidates for tenure who were in the probationary period during calendar year 2020. See Appendix C.

FAQ #66 What is the best way to indicate on Activity Insight/the Dossier how COVID-19 impacted our teaching, research, and service activities?

Candidates for promotion and tenure were encouraged (but not required) to describe how the events of 2020/21 (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, societal/racial tensions, political unrest) impacted their work, and the steps they took to manage these impacts, in the narrative that accompanies their dossier for promotion and/or tenure.

FAQ #67 May I list conference presentations that I was scheduled to deliver at meetings that were canceled due to COVID-19?

You may list your unattended conference presentations along with a comment that the presentation was “accepted but not delivered due to COVID-19.”

FAQ #69 The short-form of the SRTE was administered in fall 2020. These results were not available to academic administrators. May I include my SRTEs for fall 2020 in my dossier?

Yes, you may. In addition, all faculty are to include an alternative assessment for the fall 2020 semester. More detail about the impact of COVID on the assessment of teaching effectiveness can be found in the 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines in section II.C.2.

FAQ #70 How will peer teaching reviews in spring of 2020, fall 2021, and spring 2021? be handled in the promotion and tenure review process? ?

Tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty routinely undergo peer review of teaching and contribute to peer review of teaching committees. In acknowledgement of the COVID-19 crisis and its extraordinary impacts on our faculty, and our collective shift to a remote learning environment, Penn State suspended peer review of teaching, as of March 16, for Spring semester 2020. As outlined in the 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines (II.C.2), the omission of a peer teaching observation does not provide any evidence relevant to the assessment of teaching effectiveness. A faculty member who believe the absence of spring 2020 semester peer observation(s) would create a significant gap in their dossier may have proceeded with having a peer assess their spring 2020 course materials, consistent with the unit guidelines outlined for peer teaching review, but this was

not required.

Peer teaching review was not suspended for fall of 2020 or spring 2021 and was expected to occur. Note that per the 2021-2022 Administrative Guidelines (p. 5, II.C.1.c.), peer review can consist of wide range of activities that may (or may not) include class visitation. Members of the department/division/school/campus promotion and tenure committee in consultation with the department head/director of academic affairs/chief academic officer/school director/division head were expected to review whether existing guidelines for peer teaching review should be modified in light of the pandemic. Committees were asked to wish to address issues including whether to modify 1) how peer teaching reviews are conducted, including whether review of course materials or a teaching portfolio may replace a teaching observation given remote learning delivery; and 2) the total number of peer reviews required for the formal review given the suspension of peer teaching reviews in spring 2020.

Faculty within the unit were to be provided with specific instructions about how to proceed with peer reviews so that expectations are clear to both committee members and faculty and any changes to unit guidelines must be reflected in the letter from department/division/school/campus promotion and tenure committee and the department head/director of academic affairs/chief academic officer/school director/division head.

FAQ #72 How should the charge to promotion and tenure committees be modified in the midst of the pandemic?

Please see the Standard Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees on the VPFA website. A portion of this document addresses additional points to be addressed in response to COVID.

Revised: July 1, 2021