

## Guidance for Extension of the Probationary Period due to COVID-19

April 3, 2020

On March 20, the University announced that, in acknowledgement of the COVID-19 crisis and its extraordinary impacts on our faculty, Penn State is extending the provisional tenure period starting with the 2020-2021 academic year for all faculty in their pre-tenure probationary period, as defined in University policy [AC23](#).

*Who is eligible?*

ALL tenure-line faculty in their probationary period during Spring 2020 are eligible.

*What does it mean to confirm this tenure clock extension?*

By completing the survey entitled [Confirmation of the Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19](#), the faculty member's probationary period will be extended by one year. This extension is not considered a stay but a response to the negative impacts that COVID-19 may have on a faculty member's research, teaching, and service. Faculty members who confirm their acceptance of the extension but later decide that they do not want the additional year added to their probationary period may relinquish the extension by notifying the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at [vpfa@psu.edu](mailto:vpfa@psu.edu).

*When do faculty members have to decide whether to confirm their acceptance of the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19?*

For those undergoing formal reviews at the second and fourth year and those that may occur at the third or fifth year, submission of the [survey](#) confirming the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 must occur before the start of the formal review. Thus, in the year a faculty member is undergoing a formal review, the deadline for completion of the survey is **August 31**. Once the formal review has begun, confirmation of the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 will not be accepted until the formal review has concluded.

A faculty member must confirm acceptance of the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 no later than **April 1** in the penultimate year of the probationary period by completing the [survey](#). For faculty members whose sixth-year tenure review is scheduled for Fall 2020, confirmation of the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 must be communicated by completing the [survey](#) by **April 30, 2020**.

*How do faculty confirm the extension of the probationary period?*

Confirmation of the extension of the probationary period will be directed to the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs. Faculty who wish to confirm acceptance of the extension to the probationary period should complete the [survey](#).

*Who should faculty contact with questions?*

Email questions about the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 to the Office for the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at [vpfa@psu.edu](mailto:vpfa@psu.edu). FAQs pertaining to this guidance are provided below.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **EXTENSION OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD DUE TO COVID-19**

*Why do I have to confirm my one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19?*

We recognize that many faculty members want to continue on their current timetable for tenure review. In addition, we also recognize that the impacts of COVID-19 may not be apparent now but may manifest later in a faculty member's career. Asking for confirmation of the extension of the probationary period gives individual faculty members maximum flexibility.

*Do I need permission from my academic unit leader to confirm my acceptance of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19?*

No. You need only to confirm your acceptance of the extension of the probationary period with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs by completing the survey entitled [Confirmation of the Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19](#). However, we strongly recommend that you notify your academic unit leader (i.e., department head/school director/director of academic affairs) that you are confirming the request. Given that your review schedule will be modified, your academic unit leaders will be notified immediately once you confirm your acceptance of the extension of the probationary period by one year due to COVID-19.

*I am undergoing my second/fourth year review this fall. If I don't confirm my acceptance of the one-year extension of the probationary period now, will I have the chance to confirm acceptance later?*

Yes. While we ask that you confirm your acceptance of the one-year extension of the probationary period by August 31 of the academic year in which you are undergoing formal review, once the formal review is completed, you may confirm your acceptance of the extension at any time through April 1 of the penultimate year in your probationary period.

*Why do I have to confirm my acceptance of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 by April 1 of the penultimate year of the probationary period (e.g., year prior to the sixth-year review)?*

The process of identifying external reviewers for sixth-year reviews typically begins late in the spring semester. Confirming acceptance of the one-year extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19 in April of the penultimate year of the probationary period allows that process to begin at a time that will maximize the likelihood that the external reviewers best suited to serve in that capacity can do so.

*I am not going to confirm acceptance of the one-year extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19. Can I still put in a request for early tenure?*

Yes. Approval must be sought in accordance with existing policies and guidelines for early tenure consideration. consideration (see “[Guidelines for Recommending Faculty for Early Tenure](#)”).

*If I withdraw my confirmation of the one-year extension of the probationary period, will I have to request early tenure?*

No. You may withdraw your confirmation of the one-year extension period due to COVID-19 at any time through **April 1** of your penultimate year in the probationary period. Requests to withdraw confirmation of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 should be made by contacting the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at [vpfa@psu.edu](mailto:vpfa@psu.edu). We strongly recommend that you notify your academic unit leader (i.e., department head/school director/director of academic affairs) that you are submitting the request to withdraw confirmation. Academic unit leaders will be notified immediately once you withdraw your acceptance of the extension of the probationary period by one year due to COVID-19.

*Will confirming the one-year extension of probationary period due to COVID-19 count toward the limit of two stays currently in place?*

No. The one-year extension of the probationary period is not considered a stay but rather a response to an extraordinary situation. Faculty members are still entitled to up to two stays as outlined in Appendix G of the [Administrative Guidelines for AC-23](#).

*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 Spring 2020 as indicated below.

“The time period for achieving tenure and promotion to associate professor can vary, including one or more extensions of the tenure clock. **In Spring 2020, Penn State extended its tenure clock by one year in acknowledgement of the negative impacts of COVID-19.** A faculty member must be evaluated according to the number of years on the tenure clock, not the number of years since being hired. The faculty member should not be held to a standard higher than the one he/she would have had to meet if the tenure decision had been made in the year it was originally scheduled.”

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*Who should faculty contact with questions?*

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