FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EXTENSION OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD DUE TO COVID-19

April 10, 2020

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

We are requiring confirmation because we recognize that many faculty members want to continue on their current timetable for tenure review. Because the impacts of COVID-19 may not be apparent now but may manifest later in a faculty member’s career, we have created a system that allows for maximum flexibility in timing the extension relative to future reviews.

What will happen when I confirm my one-year extension of the probationary period?

When confirmation is received, your probationary period will be extended by one year, effective immediately. All subsequent reviews will be advanced by one year.

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 online form entitled Confirmation of Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19. Given that your review schedule will be modified, your academic unit leaders will be notified once you confirm your acceptance of the extension. We strongly recommend that you notify your academic unit leader (e.g., department head/school director/director of academic affairs) that you are confirming the request at the time you submit the form.

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 my acceptance later?

Yes. If you want the extension of the probationary period to take effect immediately, you must confirm acceptance of the one-year extension of the probationary period by August 31. If not, confirmation of the extension may be submitted at any time up until April 1 of the penultimate year of the probationary period (April 30 for those whose sixth-year tenure review is scheduled for Fall 2020).

Please note that once a formal review (e.g., 2nd, 4th, or 5th) is underway, the review will proceed through its conclusion. A confirmation submitted while a review is ongoing will be applied when the review is completed.
For these reasons, in a year when a faculty member is undergoing a formal review, we recommend completing the form to confirm the extension no later than **August 31**.

**If I confirm my acceptance of the attention during a formal review period (e.g., 2nd, 4th, 5th), when will the extension be applied?**

Extensions will begin with the next academic year. So, for example, if a faculty member confirms the extension during/after the conclusion of a 2nd year review, the extension will start the following July. While the faculty member again technically will be in year 2 of the probationary period, another 2nd year review will not be completed.

**If I don’t confirm acceptance until the penultimate year, do the 2nd and 4th year reviews occur without an extension year?**

Yes. The extension of the probationary period occurs once confirmation is received.

**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., the 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 due to COVID-19 in April of the penultimate year of the probationary period will allow that process to begin when 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 submit a request for early tenure?**

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

**How do I withdraw my confirmation of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19?**

Email requests to withdraw confirmation of the one-year extension to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu by **April 1** of the penultimate year of the probationary period. Academic unit leaders will be notified once you withdraw your acceptance of the extension. It is strongly recommended that you notify your academic unit leader (e.g., department head/school director/director of academic affairs) that you are submitting a request to withdraw the confirmation.
If I withdraw my confirmation of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19, will I have to request early tenure?

No, you do not need to request early tenure. You may withdraw your confirmation of the one-year extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 at any time through April 1 of your penultimate year in the probationary period.

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 (page 52) 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.”

If a faculty member started in January (2020), his/her tenure clock wouldn’t start until July. Would the COVID-19 extension apply to that individual?

Yes. Any faculty member on the tenure line in Spring 2020 is eligible for a one-year extension to the probationary period.

How do faculty confirm the extension of the probationary period?

Faculty members who wish to confirm their acceptance should complete the online form entitled Confirmation of Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19, which will be directed to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Who should faculty contact with questions?

Email questions about the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu.