



PennState

Faculty Affairs

GUIDANCE FOR UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND INSTRUCTORS

APRIL 17, 2020 *

Penn State leadership continues to carefully monitor the COVID-19 crisis. These guidelines will be regularly reviewed and updated as warranted. Please consult the [Coronavirus Information FAQs](#) for additional information about specific topics.

DELIVERING INSTRUCTION

All Penn State classes, except those delivered by the College of Medicine, continue to be taught remotely through the end of the Spring 2020 semester. Faculty members should remain flexible and creative in their instruction and their ongoing efforts to think differently about how students can achieve course learning outcomes.

All spring courses should continue to be delivered **synchronously** at the times they were scheduled for on-campus classes. Synchronous teaching – having instructors remotely engage with learners during their regularly scheduled class times – is in our students' best interest. The real-time component gives students and faculty a familiar context that maintains a course's pace, provides invaluable opportunities for faculty-student interaction, and helps to alleviate stress and anxiety. This also reduces pressure on faculty to adapt pedagogies, assignments, and syllabi designed for in-person classes rather than redesign the course for a fully online context, where asynchronous interaction is built into the course. However, we also encourage faculty to be flexible with students who may be in a different time zone or who have other time constraints in order that all students can be successful in the class. An explanation of options for synchronous teaching can be found in the [FAQ](#) section of Penn State's remote teaching website. Extenuating circumstances (e.g., child or elder care) may prevent some faculty from offering consistent synchronous instruction. If this applies to you, contact the administrators of your academic unit to discuss accommodations or alternative arrangements. Faculty are expected to communicate clearly to students, so they know how to access course materials and about any changes to the syllabus, assignments, and grading during this period of remote course delivery.

Regarding summer courses, a mix of asynchronous and synchronous online courses will be offered during Maymester, Summer Session I, and Summer Session II. More details can be found in a recent story published in [Penn State News](#).

Many resources are available at remoteteaching.psu.edu to help faculty members teach classes remotely, including guidance for delivering courses using tools such as Canvas,

Kaltura, and Zoom. Resources to facilitate students' ability to engage in learning remotely are available at remotelearning.psu.edu.

Graduate students involved in the instructional mission, research, and/or who are on assistantships with activities other than the instructional mission and research should refer to [information on The Graduate School's website](#).

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Penn State is committed to maintaining the good health of all students and employees and encouraging prevention practices across the University community. These guidelines align with University policies in support of that goal.

Domestic Travel

All University-sponsored domestic air travel involving students, faculty, and staff is suspended through at least June 30, 2020. Any nonessential travel, including between Penn State campuses, should be avoided in accordance with Pennsylvania's statewide Stay at Home Order. Virtual meeting options, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, are encouraged.

If travel is essential, requests should be screened by and submitted through unit executives to Executive Vice President and Provost Nicholas P. Jones at provost@psu.edu and include a description of why the travel is mission critical. For the Applied Research Laboratory, essential travel will be reviewed by Senior Vice President for Research Lora G. Weiss at OSVPRTravel@psu.edu. For the College of Medicine, essential travel will be reviewed by Interim Dean of the College of Medicine Kevin Black at dean@pennstatehealth.psu.edu.

International Travel

All University-sponsored international travel involving students, faculty, and staff is suspended until further notice. Given the uncertainty due to COVID-19, we recommend that University personnel avoid making travel reservations in order to avoid the costs and disruption that might come with future cancellations.

If travel is essential, requests should be screened by and submitted through unit executives to Executive Vice President and Provost Nicholas P. Jones at provost@psu.edu and include a description of why the travel is mission critical. For the Applied Research Laboratory, essential travel will be reviewed by Senior Vice President for Research Lora G. Weiss at OSVPRTravel@psu.edu. For the College of Medicine, essential travel will be reviewed by Interim Dean of the College of Medicine Kevin Black at dean@pennstatehealth.psu.edu.

MANAGING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, EXPOSURE, DIAGNOSES AND SELF-QUARANTINE

Faculty who become symptomatic should contact Absence Management at absence@psu.edu or (814) 865-1782 to discuss a medical leave of absence and clearance requirements for returning to work. For information regarding Family Medical Leave, please see University policy [HRG11](#). More details about assessing and reporting COVID-19 symptoms, diagnoses, and exposure can be found on [Penn State's Environment Health and Safety website](#).

Unless they are ill, faculty are expected to meet their obligations while under self-quarantine and should consult with their unit executives on how best to meet their teaching, research, and service responsibilities during this period.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Regardless of the size of the meeting or event, all nonessential meetings and events should be canceled, rescheduled, or offered virtually through at least June 19, 2020. Any essential meetings should maintain good social distancing practices, including ample space between participants (at least six feet). No new non-essential large events (over 10 attendees) should be scheduled. For essential large events expected to have more than 10 attendees, approval to hold the event must be sought from Executive Vice President and Provost Nicholas P. Jones at provost@psu.edu. All requests should include a description of how social distancing will be maintained during the event.

VISITING SCHOLARS

Moratorium on New Applications

Based on the recent U.S. Department of State Global Health Advisory and visa services suspension, Penn State is not accepting new Visiting Scholar applications until further notice. This moratorium applies to domestic and international visiting scholars. Applications currently in the system will not be approved.

Extensions for Current Visiting Scholars

If a Visiting Scholar was scheduled to depart before June 30, 2020 but wants to stay at Penn State due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an extension request must be submitted in DocFinity. Please work with the staff in your unit who submit Visiting Scholar requests. Questions from your unit regarding extensions and required documentation should be directed to you as the dean or chancellor designee. If you need assistance from the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, contact Mindy Kowalski at msk22@psu.edu.

INVITED VISITORS TO CAMPUS

Per guidance from the U.S. Department of State, all foreign nationals scheduled to arrive on campus before August 1, 2020, must reschedule their visits. Unit executives

should send requests for exceptions to vpfa@psu.edu and include a description of why the visit is essential.

Consistent with travel guidance issued by Penn State, individuals invited to campus before June 30, 2020, must reschedule their visits. Unit executives should send requests for exceptions to vpfa@psu.edu and include a description of why the visit is essential.

POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS (POST-DOCS)

Per guidance from the U.S. Department of State, post-docs who are foreign nationals and were scheduled to arrive on campus before August 1, 2020, must reschedule their arrivals. Unit executives should send exception requests to postdocaffairs@psu.edu and include a description of why the appointment is essential.

For post-docs who are U. S. citizens or foreign nationals (currently living in the U.S.), and scheduled to begin before June 30, 2020, those who can start their work remotely should be encouraged to do so given that University-sponsored domestic air travel is suspended through at least June 30. Unit executives should send exception requests to postdocaffairs@psu.edu and include a description of why the appointment is essential.

FACULTY SEARCHES

If you are granted an exception to conduct a search, academic units should use Zoom or other virtual tools for interviews to prioritize the health of candidates, participants, and their families. Consistent with guidance issued by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf, all scheduled on-site campus interviews for domestic candidates must be postponed until at least June 30, 2020. On-campus interviews with international candidates should be held virtually or rescheduled after June 30, 2020.

Please note that these dates may change based on future guidance. As a result, units have the authority to postpone a search or conduct an entirely virtual search. As you structure the process, please strive to make interviews as consistent as possible for each candidate. As always, ensure that evaluation of all applicants is based on the extent to which applicants meet the criteria for the position.

PROMOTION AND TENURE

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 for the extension?

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 online form entitled [Confirmation of 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. When confirmation of the tenure clock extension is received, the faculty member's probationary period will be adjusted, and the dates of all formal reviews will move forward one year.

Faculty members who confirm their acceptance of the extension but later decide that they do not want the year added to their probationary period may relinquish the extension by notifying the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu. Please note that if a faculty member is in the midst of a formal review, the extension will be applied once the formal review is completed. Read the [FAQs](#) for more details.

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

A faculty member must confirm acceptance of the extension no later than **April 1** in the penultimate year of the probationary period by completing the aforementioned [form](#). 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).

If a faculty member wants the one-year extension of the probationary period to take effect immediately, confirmation of the extension period must be received by **August 31** of the academic year. Once a formal review (e.g., 2nd, 4th, or 5th) is underway, the review will proceed through its conclusion, and 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**.

How do faculty confirm the extension of the probationary period?

Faculty who wish to confirm acceptance of the extension of the probationary period may do so at any time by completing the [form](#), 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. Note: Comprehensive [FAQs pertaining to this guidance](#) are provided online.

STUDENTS RATINGS OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Student Ratings of Teacher Effectiveness (SRTEs) will be administered for Spring 2020 courses. Consistent with a [resolution approved by the University Faculty Senate resolution](#), SRTEs will be used only formatively in annual reviews. Only faculty members will have access to their SRTEs, and administrators must not ask faculty members to share their results. This applies to instructors of any rank, title, or position at all locations, as well as to graduate students who teach.

PEER TEACHING REVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

Tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty members routinely undergo and conduct peer reviews of teaching. In acknowledgement of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on our faculty and the shift to a remote learning environment, peer reviews of teaching are suspended as of March 16 for Spring semester 2020.

Peer evaluations completed PRIOR to March 16 may be used as a means of providing feedback to the faculty member and can be included in promotion and tenure dossiers and annual performance evaluations.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

For 2019 annual reviews, the deadline for unit executives to submit their attestation that all annual reviews of faculty members have been completed, consistent with University policy [AC40](#) (Annual Evaluation of Faculty Performance), has been extended. Attestations by unit executives for faculty members at University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses are due by July 1, 2020. Attestation by the dean of the College of Medicine is due by July 31, 2020.

Guidance will be forthcoming about how faculty will be evaluated for the 2020 calendar year, including recommended criteria to include and how to provide assessments in individuals' annual reviews. Please note that all instructors should be prepared to document their "good-faith efforts" to transition their courses to remote delivery. This may include providing an updated syllabus or a one-page statement explaining the steps taken to make this transition.

SABBATICALS

For sabbaticals disrupted in 2019-2020, unit executives are expected to adjust expectations for accomplishment of sabbatical goals and hold faculty harmless for a situation outside of their control. When possible, adjustments to sabbaticals should be made locally.

For sabbaticals scheduled for 2020-2021, formal requests to delay a sabbatical until 2021-2022, including a rationale for the delay, should be submitted by unit executives to

the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu. If the request to delay the sabbatical is due to COVID-19 (e.g., inability to travel), to determine the eligibility for a subsequent sabbatical, the sabbatical year will remain 2020-2021. See the [updated FAQs](#) for AC17 - Sabbatical Leave for more details.

** These guidelines and requirements are current as of the date listed herein and are subject to change.*