



Revisions to the Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Policy AC23 for 2020-2021

Changes to the Administrative Guidelines

- **II. C. 2 (Page 6) – *COVID-19 Impacts on Teaching***
 - Specified that not including SRTEs, peer teaching observations, or alternative documentation of teaching activities for spring 2020 may not be used to penalize candidates.
 - Added a new Appendix “M” for recommended alternatives to document teaching activities.

- **III. F. 3 (Page 12) – *The deadline for submission of factual changes or new information has been updated to February 1*** (or the weekday immediately following February 1).

- **VII. (Pages 26) – *Extension of the Probationary Period due to COVID-19***
 - Starting with the 2020 calendar year for all faculty in their pre-tenure probationary period, faculty can confirm extension of the probationary period.

- **Appendix B (Pages 33-34) – *Timetable for 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure Reviews***, the following is updated.
 - The Timetable for 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure Reviews has been updated.
 - February 1, 2020-All factual changes or new information must be submitted by this date.

- **Appendix F (Page 40) – *Dossier Dividers and Forms***, it is noted that the following fields and dossier dividers have been revised.
 - Promotion and Tenure Form (Page 41)
 - The “Purpose” was updated to read: “This recommendation form is used for (1) recommending or not recommending continuance on the tenure track; (2) awarding tenure to the ranks of professor, librarian, associate professor, associate librarian, and assistant professor, and (3) for promotion to the ranks of professor, librarian, senior scientist, associate professor, associate librarian, and senior research associate.”
 - Biographical Data for Promotion/Tenure Review Form (Page 42)
 - II. - Deletion of “Status” Column
 - The Scholarship of Librarianship (Page 44)
 - Addition of “Professional development activities related to your librarianship activities”

- **Appendix I (Pages 55-57) – several clarifications were made to the immediate tenure process.**
 - Clarification that the immediate tenure process is to be utilized for those who currently have tenure at the institution they are leaving
 - Clarification that a summary of documentation of teaching effectiveness, not all of the candidate’s prior teaching evaluations
 - Administrators are expected to consult with the chair of the unit’s promotion and tenure committee to make the determination of whether additional letters should be requested
- **Appendix M (Pages 62-64) – added “Suggested Alternative Documentation of Teaching Activities in Spring Semester 2020 Due to COVID-19”**

Additions and Changes to the FAQs (Nos. 2, 7, 9, 14, 27, 44, and 60-71)

- **FAQ #2.** updated this question to align with most colleges now using Activity Insight
- *Most Colleges are now using Activity Insight (Digital Measures by Watermark) to generate dossiers. How does the use of Activity Insight impact the dossier and review process?*

Activity Insight is a tool for generating the dossier. The output is consistent with the expectations outlined in the dividers as well as with the Administrative Guidelines.

- **FAQ #7** updated date to reflect the change to February 1 for additional materials to be added to candidate’s dossier
- *Can information be added to the dossier after the department committee has reviewed it, and if so, must the committee meet again to review the dossier and write a new letter?*

It is not appropriate to add information to the dossier after it has been reviewed if that information was available at the time the dossier was assembled and reviewed, unless a significant error had been made. However, until **February 1**, if there are new achievements that might have an impact on the record—a judgment will need to be made by the appropriate administrator—then that information must be sent back to all who have already acted on the dossier. If the new information has no impact on the recommendation, then that is all that need be indicated. (Pages 11-12, III.F.)

- **FAQ #9** added language for best practices involving multiple authors and publishing outlets beyond the candidate’s field
- *Section II.D says that “It is expected that units encourage and support collaborative and interdisciplinary research and that units will develop methods to assess these activities.” How are such measures to be presented in the dossier?*

The unit should address what potential measures could or should be used in its criteria statement/guidelines. **Because interdisciplinary team research involves multiple authors (papers and publications) and/or investigators (grant awards), best practices suggest committees identify how candidates can document their roles in collaborative products. In**

addition, if publications in the major journals in the field are an indication of quality, then those journals should be listed in the guidelines. **Interdisciplinary team science often means that individuals are publishing in outlets other than the major journals in their own field and information on the quality of outlets beyond the candidate’s major field should be provided.** In the dossier itself, those achievements should be itemized in section II.D. If citation indices are being used, the results should be presented in objective form in this section. (Page 6, II.D.)

- **FAQ #14** is a new question that addresses items in the dossier in another language.

- *If items presented in the dossier are in another language, should they be translated?*

Ideally all (but at least half) of the materials sent to external reviewers must be translated in English. The original materials should also be sent to external reviewers. The College makes the arrangements and pays for/covers the cost of the translations. The candidate is given the opportunity to review the translations and the translations should become part of the supplemental materials. If not all of the articles are translated at least one, ideally more, of the external reviewers must be able to read the language the materials are written in. The College may also ask a Penn State employee who can read the language the materials are written in to serve as an internal reviewer and verify that that the materials are consistent with how they are represented in the dossier . This internal review letter becomes part of the dossier and the candidate has access to the letter.

- **FAQ #27** has an updated answer regarding the deans letter with a jointly appointed faculty member.

- *How are deans (primary and secondary) of a faculty member jointly appointed in two colleges informed of the process?*

For faculty members holding joint appointments in two colleges, the dean of the primary college must consult with the dean of the secondary college before writing his or her letter for any promotion or tenure review and copy the secondary on all communications. (Page 21, V. E.4.)

- **FAQ #44** added language of when to use the Immediate Tenure, Out-of-Sequence, or a Hybrid process. Specified that “summary” of student peer evaluations is requested rather than all of the candidate’s teaching evaluations.

- *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 “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. (See Appendix J.)** 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 73-75, Appendix I)

- **FAQ #60-71** are new questions and answers to reflect adjustments due to COVID-19
- *Where can I find out more about the extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19, including whether I'm eligible?*

The extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 applies to any faculty member in the probationary period during calendar year 2020. More information about the extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19 can be found in the administrative guidelines (Page 26, VII) and in the [FAQs](#) related to this guidance. (VII).

- *If a candidate takes the COVID-19 extension, will this be indicated on the P&T form?*

The decision to take the COVID-19 extension will not be indicated on the P&T form.

- *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. 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.

- *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](#)" in Appendix H of the Administrative Guidelines.)

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

You may use your narrative statement to document how COVID-19 may have hindered or

impacted your activities. You can also use the comment section to indicate, for example, that a presentation/paper was accepted but not delivered due to COVID-19.

- *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 unable to be presented because of COVID-19.”

- *During the COVID-19 crisis, teaching has been greatly influenced. If submitting a tenure package on time, how much will that influence the promotion decision?*

During the spring 2020 semester Penn State required faculty to convert all residential courses to remote delivery. The university suspended use of SRTEs and peer reviews for evaluation of teaching effectiveness given that the move to remote delivery affected faculty members in serious, consequential, and distinct ways. Faculty who do not include any of the alternative documentation of teaching effectiveness for spring 2020 semester cannot be penalized for not including them. Faculty candidates for promotion may wish to provide alternative documentation about their teaching in spring semester 2020. See Appendix M for recommended alternatives to document teaching activities in the spring 2020 semester. (II.C.2).

- *While SRTEs will be administered in spring of 2020, results will not be available to academic administrators. May I still include my SRTEs for spring 2020 in my dossier?*

Only courses taught will be automatically added to a faculty member’s Activity Insight record. SRTEs will not be included in Activity Insight for any faculty member. Some faculty may want to include their spring 2020 SRTEs in their promotion dossiers. However, the inclusion of spring 2020 SRTEs by some, but not others, compromises the spirit of equity and fairness because questions likely will be raised about why other faculty choose to omit them. As a result, it is recommended that only in the rarest of circumstances should a faculty member include them, such as if there is a specific need to demonstrate achievement in response to specific guidance for improvement.

- *How will peer teaching observations be handled for those going up for formal review in fall of 2020?*

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. Per the 2020-2021 University Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines (p. 6, IIC2), candidates who do not include any documentation of teaching effectiveness as an alternative to peer review for spring 2020 semester cannot be penalized for doing so. As stated in the 2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines, Appendix M, a faculty member who believed 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 is not suspended for fall of 2020 and will be expected to occur. Note that per the 2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines (p. 5, IIC1c.), 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 are expected to review whether existing guidelines for peer teaching review should be modified in light of the pandemic. Issues committees may wish to address include 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. Some useful information about how to conduct peer reviews of face-to-face and hybrid teaching can be found here.

Pre-tenure faculty within the unit are 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. Candidates must be treated fairly and equitably. The appropriate unit with jurisdiction over peer review will be asked to specify how their peer review expectations were modified (or not) in response to COVID-19 when they submit their promotion and tenure guidelines to the next level of review and, ultimately, to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

In regard to peer review of non-tenure-line promotion, unit executives are expected to ask the appropriate unit with jurisdiction over peer teaching review to consider modification to peer review guidelines for non-tenure line faculty to reflect the suspension of peer teaching review in spring of 2020. Further, the unit is expected to review whether existing guidelines for peer teaching review should be modified in light of the pandemic, addressing the issues outlined above and informing candidates as necessary of changes in expectations.

- *I've had several class observations this semester for the fourth-year review that was to take place next academic year (2020-2021). If my 4th-year review takes place in the 2021-2022 academic year instead, will these observation letters still be valid, or will they have to be redone?*

The peer teaching observations you currently have will not need to be re-done. Please see Appendix M for a recommended alternative to a peer teaching observation.

- *How should the charge to promotion and tenure committees be modified in the midst of the pandemic?*

Below are the key items to be covered in all charges to promotion and tenure committees, to be augmented by discussion of academic unit expectations.

- All committee members are expected to be familiar with academic unit guidelines as well as university guidelines (see vpfa.psu.edu for links to AC23, the 2020-2021 P&T Administrative Guidelines, and an extensive set of FAQs).
- The following items are standard topics that should be addressed in charges to all committees:

- **Confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process is to be respected forever, not just during that particular year of review. Members of promotion and tenure committees participate with the understanding that all matters related to their deliberations remain confidential. (see FAQ #1)**
 - **Discussions of candidates should not occur via email or in locations that do not maintain the privacy of candidates (see FAQ #71).**
 - **Personal notes must be securely destroyed beyond recovery immediately after the committee has reached a decision or concluded the promotion and tenure process (see FAQ # 24).**
- **All reviewing agents, administrators, or committees must consult with the unit that made the prior recommendation if they seek clarification or are considering rendering a recommendation or decision contrary to the previous level of review. Such consultations must be documented in the letter (see FAQ #38 for more details).**
- **Please consider whether there are any meaningful conflicts of interest that must be attended to given the candidates under review. If you are concerned that you cannot form an unbiased opinion, disclose the possible conflict of interest to your unit head and seek consultation about how to best move forward. (see FAQ #16)**
- **Reviewers are to confine their reviews to the contents of the dossier. If committees have questions about the contents of the dossier or believe additional information is needed, committee members should work with the department head/chief academic officer/director of academic affairs/school to director to obtain clarification. It is critical that every level of review has access to the same information.**
- **In consultation with the academic unit leader, information may be added to the dossier after a unit promotion and tenure committee has reviewed it, if that information was not available at the time the dossier was assembled and reviewed. Such additions must occur by February 1. Consistent with the principle that every level of review must have access to the same information, the dossier must go back through all levels of review. (see FAQ #7).**
- **COVID Items:**
 - **Every Promotion and Tenure committee must decide at the outset whether all meetings will occur in-person or virtually. See FAQ #71 for more details and review these with the committee.**
 - **Give some consideration of how COVID may have impacted the record-see IIC2 and Appendix M in the 2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines; FAQs #64-71).**
 - **Committees at the department/school/campus must evaluate peer review teaching criteria and determine whether modifications to existing unit guidelines must be made; candidates must be provided with guidance about how to proceed in regard to peer review. Please see FAQ #68 for more details.**
 - **As indicated in the 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure guidelines, candidates who do not include any of the alternative documentation of teaching effectiveness for spring 2020 semester cannot be penalized for not including**

them. To be clear, candidates are not required to provide SRTE data for spring and summer 2020 nor may they be penalized for doing so. See IIC2 in the 2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines; FAQs #66-67 for more information.

- **Charge items specific to the academic unit/level of review**
 - Academic unit guidance is to be determined by the academic unit leader delivering the charge per the discipline.
 - See VG6 in the 2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines for information about level of review. A short summary is below.
 - **Department:** Evaluation of all three criteria in light of department guidelines.
 - **College:** Review campus and/or department recommendations in light of:
 - College criteria and expectations;
 - Equity among departments;
 - Procedural fairness.
 - **University:** Review all previous recommendations in light of:
 - University criteria and expectations;
 - Equity within and among colleges;
 - Procedural fairness.

- *Can Promotion and Tenure committees meet virtually?*

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Promotion and Tenure committees may wish to meet virtually rather than in person. Prior to the committee's first meeting, committee members must formulate a plan for meetings and decide upon one meeting mode (in-person or virtual) for all of the committee's meetings. Promotion and Tenure committees may not meet via a hybrid approach (i.e., with some members in person and some virtual). Committees that decide to meet in person must follow Penn State's Meetings and Events guidelines. (Keep in mind that in-person meetings with more than 10 attendees require unit executive permission.)

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). Below are some "best practices" and considerations regarding how these meetings should be conducted.

Confidentiality

- Consistent with the need for meetings to be confidential, committees should meet via Zoom; consult with IT staff regarding security implications if you wish to use another platform.
- It is not permitted to record meetings.

Attendance

- 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.**
- **Prepare for unlikely scenarios such as Zoom crashing, chair or participants losing connection, etc.**

Discussion and Voting

- **In cases of conflicts of interest, attendees must be checked out of meeting and checked back in.**
- **Ensure that documents are available in a secure platform such as OneDrive.**
- **For committees that vote by secret ballot, construct a method to collect votes for each case under consideration. Qualtrics and Zoom may be two ways to do this.**
- **No discussion about candidates may occur via email.**