



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EXTENSION OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD DUE TO COVID-19

Updated September 18, 2020

LOGISTICS

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.

How will I know my confirmation was received and my clock adjusted?

You will receive correspondence from the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs confirming your acceptance of the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 when your probationary end date has been updated in Workday.

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/chief academic officer/director of academic affairs) that you are confirming the request at the time you submit the form.

Is there a deadline during our probationary period by which we need to decide if we will take the extension?

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. 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 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.

If I confirm my acceptance of the extension during a formal review period, 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)?

Our goal is to identify highly qualified and well-respected faculty members in your discipline to serve as external reviewers. The process of identifying external reviewers for sixth-year reviews typically begins late in the spring semester, both at Penn State and at our peer institutions. Confirming acceptance of the one-year extension due to COVID-19 no later than April 1 of the penultimate year of the probationary period will maximize our ability to identify appropriate external reviewers to review your dossier.

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/chief academic officer/director of academic affairs) that you are submitting a request to withdraw the confirmation.

If I apply for the extension now and end up not wanting to take it later - when do I opt out? Do I wait until the year of a formal review (i.e., 2nd year, 4th year, 6th year) or can I opt out at any time?

If you are in the midst of a formal review, the decision to relinquish extension will be applied once the formal review is completed. Your academic unit will be notified, and your tenure clock will be adjusted.

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 **the calendar year** 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.

What steps should I take (if any) if I am interested to go for tenure on time?

You should do nothing.

EARLY TENURE

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.](#)")

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.

STAY VS. EXTENSION OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Is the one-year extension of the tenure track probationary period in any way different from taking a "tenure stay" due to other life events?

The extension of the probationary period is different in many ways. A stay must be requested of your department head/DAA/school director, who must provide their approval and then submit it to their dean/chancellor for approval, who must then submit to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs for final approval. You may receive no more than two stays during the course of the probationary

period. Once you have a stay, your clock is permanently adjusted, and you may not relinquish a stay. So, if you decide, after receiving a stay, that you would like to revert to your original clock, you must request early tenure and the same approval process outlined previously must be followed. The extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 does not require approval of any kind. You only need submit your confirmation of the extension directly to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs by April 1 of your penultimate year of the probationary period. Similarly, you can relinquish your extension (once) if you find that you did not need the extension and you need not request approval of that decision.

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](#).

I am having a baby and I received a stay of tenure. Can I exchange the stay I received for the COVID-19 extension of the probationary period?

No. Consistent with our standard practice, individuals who have been approved for a stay may not relinquish it. You may [request](#) and receive up to two stays while on the probationary period. In addition, you are entitled to confirm the COVID-19 extension any time up until April 1 of the penultimate year of the probationary period.

SABBATICAL

If I take an extension, may I apply for sabbatical during my sixth year review, given that it is my 7th year of full-time service?

No. Penn State's standard practice is to not allow those in the last year of the probationary period to apply for sabbatical and that practice will be maintained for those who have confirmed extension of the probationary period.

Have any modifications been made to the sabbatical process due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Some adjustments have been made. Please consult p. 5 of the sabbatical [FAQs](#) on the vpfa.psu.edu website.

SCENARIOS

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 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**.

I didn't take the extension. I underwent a formal review and was recently informed that I was not recommended for continuation on the tenure-line. May I take the extension and repeat the review?

No. Once an unsuccessful review occurs, the extension may not be applied. Just a reminder to confirm your extension by August 31 of the year you are undergoing formal review.

I submitted my confirmation of the extension of the probationary period. Now it's late in my 3rd year on the "new" tenure clock and I want to relinquish the extension. Would I have a 4th year review (even though I will be technically back in my fifth year on my "old" tenure clock) and then be reviewed the following year for tenure?

Yes, the reviews would occur in back-to-back years. If you relinquish the extension and are now in the fifth year on your "original" tenure clock, per AC23, you must undergo a 4th year review. Please be aware that once the extension is relinquished, it will not be reinstated.

I submitted my confirmation of the extension of the probationary period. I am in the middle of my 4th year review and I decide I want to relinquish the extension. When would my sixth year review occur?

If you want to relinquish the extension, you may do so once the formal review is completed. If you decide to relinquish the extension after your 4th year review, you must communicate your decision by April 1 of what is now your penultimate year in the probationary period. Your sixth year review will occur in subsequent fall semester.

I confirmed my extension of the probationary period and then decided to relinquish it prior to my 4th year review. I received an unfavorable review and I now realize that COVID-19 influenced me more than I expected. Can I decide to confirm my extension now and have another 4th year review?

No. Formal review decisions are final.

OTHER COVID-19 PROMOTION AND TENURE FAQS

The [2020-2021 Administrative Guidelines for AC-23: Promotion and Tenure Procedures and Regulations](#) were amended to address the impacts of COVID-19 on teaching (see II.B.2; Appendix M) as were the 2020-2021 Promotion and Tenure FAQs.