

## **COVID-19 Unit Head and Promotion and Review Committee Guidance**

April 13, 2022

Annual, third-year, merit, promotion, tenure, and comprehensive periodic reviews rely on defined criteria of expectations and achievement within disciplines and in the good-faith judgements of internal and external evaluators. In ordinary circumstances these expectations are provided by assigned duties, unit criteria, and University policies and procedures, which are available for review and reflection. Further, while the information available on which to base review judgements may have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University still expects excellence, as demonstrated by visible, meaningful, and impactful contributions to the research/scholarship/creative works, teaching, service, extension, and librarianship missions of our University.

Under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions to research/scholarship/creative works, teaching, service, extension, and librarianship activities have varied in ways that we were unable to anticipate at the outset of the pandemic. The University recognizes the pandemic is likely to have potential long-term professional impacts on our faculty members, and as such, conversations within units, colleges/schools and the University will have to occur repeatedly over several years. Faculty members have been encouraged to include these disruptions and the impacts on their programs in an optional [COVID Impact Statement](#) (Statement) or as part of their faculty activity reports (via Faculty Success) for annual and other periodic reviews. These optional Statements are for internal review purposes and not distributed to external reviewers. While faculty members are not required to provide a Statement, or include the impacts of the pandemic in their annual reports, such documentation can provide important and useful context for all internal reviewers of the activities and accomplishments of faculty members.

In addition to the candidate-provided Statement, or pandemic-related information provided as part of the annual report, unit (departments, schools within colleges, and non-departmentalized colleges or schools) Field Impact Statements, which are internal and not shared with external evaluators, also provide important context for promotion and periodic reviews. Please see [here](#) for unit Field Impact Statement guidance.

All internal reviewers as appropriate to the review process (e.g., Chairs, Directors, Deans, Annual Review, Merit Review, APT Committees, AEP Committees, APPSC Committees, Provost) need to examine faculty activity reports and dossiers for evidence that a discipline/field has been altered in such ways that our normal expectations may need to be modified as part of periodic review (e.g., annual, merit, third year, post-tenure) and/or promotion review processes. While it is not possible to categorize the consequences and impacts of the pandemic for each individual, reviewers should proactively identify some differences in patterns or evidence attributable to the extent possible to the disruption that faculty members have faced. If provided, reviewers and evaluative committees should use the Statements, statements within faculty annual reports, Field Impact Statements, or other materials in ways that advance inclusivity and refrain from comparisons that lead to unintended bias.

The University recognizes that the work of faculty members may look different than it has in the past and that the impacts of the pandemic can accumulate over time. For example:

- The effort of pivoting to an online teaching modality may have influenced productivity in other areas of faculty assignments and expectations.
- Students enrolled in courses taught by faculty members, or those whom they are advising, may have required significant additional supports to address the challenges that the pandemic created for students.
- The pandemic may have caused early career and mid-career faculty members to shift their focus and data collection methodology for which they should not be penalized.
- Engagement with scholarly or other communities through conferences or other means were either canceled, curtailed, or changed to online/virtual formats, thus affecting the ability of faculty members to present their work and/or develop extended networks.
- The impacts on the ability to conduct research or engage in scholarly or creative activities due to personal challenges (e.g., eldercare, school and daycare closures, family and/or personal health).

Each discipline is best positioned to ascertain the professional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in general and on its faculty members in particular.

Specific disciplinary impacts notwithstanding, the University offers the following guidance regarding the conduct of periodic review (e.g., annual, merit, third-year, comprehensive) and/or promotion review processes.

1. The conduct of periodic and/or promotion review processes are centered on demonstrated excellence, fairness, and equity. The assessment of each faculty member's contributions, impact, and potential should be:
  1. Individual;
  2. Holistic;
  3. Forward-looking;
  4. Discipline-specific, discipline-informed ; and,
  5. Guided by our clear principles and language, both University and unit.
2. Units need to engage in broad discussions to explore how the discipline(s) and relevant subdisciplines have been impacted by the pandemic to inform the context of how to judge the accomplishments of faculty members.
3. Faculty member Statements, statements included in annual reports, and supporting materials are accepted as valid, equally valued, and are not comparative across individuals.
  - a. Given the variable professional impact of the pandemic on faculty members, units should focus their assessments on the quality and impact of faculty scholarship, the relevance to increasing knowledge and understanding, and appropriate level of productivity.
4. Units must attend to the Statements and materials provided by faculty members during review processes. Internal reviewers involved in the promotion and/or periodic review processes should note the range and depth of specific obstacles to faculty productivity, and consider how each candidate addressed or sought to address these obstacles. Likewise, units should recognize innovations and/or creativity in the research/scholarship/creative works, teaching, service, extension, and librarianship activities in which faculty members engaged in response to the pandemic.
  - a. Assessments about annual reviews, merit reviews, reappointment, tenure, promotion, etc. must be made on the information provided by the faculty member. In the case of promotion and/or tenure reviews, the impacts of the pandemic on candidates should be addressed in the committee evaluative reports and unit head letters in relation to unit expectations and criteria (e.g., research/scholarship/creative works, teaching, service, extension, and/or librarianship).
  - b. While faculty members are not required to provide a Statement or other COVID impact materials, reviewers should not speculate on

any impacts on behalf of faculty members who elect not to include a Statement or other statements in their annual reports.

5. Units should view the Statements, COVID-related statements included in annual reports, and/or unit statements as providing context about the impacts of the pandemic on faculty members. Units can draw on this information as they assess faculty performance and trajectory based on existing unit evaluative criteria and expectations.
6. The University anticipates that the impacts of the pandemic will evolve and be unequal and disparate over the next several years. Anticipating that recovery from the pandemic will not be equal across faculty members, units should consider how they will address COVID-related impacts and faculty assessments in the future.

The University anticipates that COVID-19 pandemic promotion and review measures will be in effect through the 2026-2027 academic year. University issued guidance will be reviewed annually by the Office of Faculty Affairs for any necessary and appropriate updates.