

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairs, Deans, and Directors

From: John Bertot
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs

Date: October 27, 2020

Subject: Temporary Modifications to Faculty Promotion and Periodic Reviews



In recognition of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) is issuing the following guidance regarding University promotion, promotion and tenure, and unit level reviews for tenured/tenure track, professional track, and permanent status/permanent status track faculty. The guidance is effective immediately and through Academic Year 2021-2022. The OFA may provide additional guidance and updates as circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic warrant.

Promotion and Tenure Reviews

External Evaluator Letters

As required per the University's Policy and Procedures on Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Faculty ([II-1.00\(A\)](#)), units are expected to solicit six external evaluator letters as part of a first-level TTK review, of which no more than half should come from the candidate's list of recommended external evaluators. However, the University recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic may create challenges with securing six letters. With appropriate documentation indicating the efforts in which units engaged to solicit and secure six letters, it may be acceptable to send dossiers forward with five letters. In such exceptional cases, units should:

- Confer with the OFA regarding such situations to seek an exception to the expectation for six external evaluator letters.
- Document efforts to solicit and secure six letters in the Letter Log provided in a candidate's dossier as per the University's Promotion and Tenure [Guidelines](#).

Further, due to potential COVID-19-related challenges in securing letter writers, APT committees are reminded not to negatively view declines by letter writers.

Additional Tenure Delay Requests

The University currently has in effect through June 1, 2021 a tenure delay option for current untenured faculty members due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Per the University's Policy on Extension of Time for Tenure Review Due to Personal and Professional Circumstances ([II-1.00\(D\)](#)), faculty members who wish to seek an additional tenure delay may do so due to

personal/professional reasons. When submitting a request, faculty members must articulate a reason or set of reasons and provide justification for the delay request. Examples may include: laboratory renovation delays; inability to travel for research purposes; challenges in accessing human subjects for research purposes; lack of availability of research materials (e.g., due to closures or limited access of library and archive collections); delayed ordering and/or arrival of critical research equipment; impact of caregiving responsibilities on research productivity; and delays in research productivity due to extended review and publication times. Approvers (e.g., Chairs, Directors, and Deans) must provide an assessment and recommendation regarding the tenure delay request.

PTK Promotion Reviews

The OFA recognizes that PTK faculty also face challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many units with PTK faculty members may have modified course assignments and/or other PTK faculty responsibilities in response to unit needs, situations, and budgetary constraints. The OFA therefore encourages and authorizes units to consider flexibility in unit promotion criteria and eligibility for PTK faculty member promotions (e.g., number of classes taught, years of service, forms, cycles, or vehicles of productivity metrics).

If current unit criteria require evaluator letters, the University recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic may create challenges in soliciting and securing such letters. With appropriate documentation indicating the efforts units engaged in to secure the requisite number of letters as per the unit's criteria, it may be acceptable to send dossiers forward with fewer letters. In such exceptional cases, units should:

- Confer with the OFA regarding such situations to seek an exception to letter requirement if the promotion is to the highest rank (or second level rank in non-departmentalized colleges), or with the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs for second-level rank promotions in departmentalized colleges.
- Units should document efforts to secure the required number of letters in a candidate's dossier.

Due to possible COVID-19-related challenges in securing letter writers, AEP committees are reminded not to negatively view declines by letter writers.

Librarian Permanent Status and Promotion Reviews

As required per the University's Policy and on Appointment, Promotion, and Permanent Status of Library Faculty ([II-1.00\(B\)](#)), units are expected to solicit six external evaluator letters, of which no more than half should come from the candidate's list of recommended external evaluators. However, the University recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic may create challenges in soliciting and securing six letters. With appropriate documentation indicating the efforts in which units engaged to secure six letters, it may be acceptable to send dossiers forward with five letters. In such exceptional cases, Units should:

- Confer with the OFA regarding such situations to seek an exception to the expectation

for six external evaluator letters.

- Document efforts to secure six letters in the Letter Log provided in a candidate's Dossier as per the Library's Promotion and Permanent Status [Guidelines](#).

Further, due to COVID-19-related challenges in securing letter writers, APPS committees are reminded not to negatively view declines by letter writers.

Additional Permanent Status Delay Requests

The University currently has in effect through June 1, 2021 a permanent status delay option for permanent-status-track librarians due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Per the University's Policy on Extension of Time for Tenure Review Due to Personal and Professional Circumstances ([II-1.00\(D\)](#)), librarians who wish to seek an additional permanent status delay may do so due to personal/professional reasons. When submitting a request, librarians must identify a reason or set of reasons and provide justification for the delay request. Examples may include: Inability to travel for research purposes; challenges in meeting librarianship criteria due to Library closures and/or limited services; lack of availability of research materials (e.g., due to closures or limited access of library and archive collections); impact of caregiving responsibilities on scholarship and other responsibilities; and delays in scholarship productivity due to extended review and publication times. The Dean must provide an assessment and recommendation regarding the permanent status delay request.

Annual and Periodic Reviews

Annual Reviews

Units should continue to conduct annual reviews, but units should prioritize reviews for faculty members in the junior ranks (e.g., assistant professor, assistant research professor, Librarian II) followed by those in senior ranks. Those whose mandatory review year or who intend to go up for promotion (TTK, PTK)/permanent status (Librarians) in AY 2021-2022 and AY 2022-2023 should receive the highest priority. Annual reviews should focus on formative goal-setting in the context of current circumstances rather than summative evaluation. The reviewer(s) should convey the agreed-upon goals in a summary letter to the faculty member and file in the unit records. Upon completion of the review, unit heads are responsible for ensuring that faculty members receive a copy of their annual review.

Merit Reviews

The OFA authorizes the temporary suspension of merit reviews in order to focus on the formative, goal-setting annual reviews. The OFA recognizes that units may combine annual and merit reviews into a single review process, and may continue to do so.

Third Year/Reappointment Reviews

Units should continue to conduct third-year/reappointment reviews (with any modified timeline due to granted tenure/permanent status review delays, if applicable) in order to ensure progress

towards tenure/permanent status.

Post-Tenure/Comprehensive Reviews

Units should continue to conduct post-tenure, with flexibility in timing. These reviews should emphasize and recognize any efforts made by senior faculty members, such as additional teaching or service, or taking on less desirable courses and/or committees, that alleviate the burdens on faculty members experiencing caregiving challenges and other COVID-19 impacts.

Comprehensive reviews for permanent status/permanent status track Librarians should continue as per the University of Maryland Libraries Permanent Status/Permanent Status Track Faculty Comprehensive Review Guidelines.

Peer Evaluation of Teaching

Units should continue to conduct peer evaluations of teaching continue, with prioritization (e.g., assistant professors, associate professors intending to go up for promotion soon, etc.). The OFA encourages units to review the guidance on [peer evaluations](#) (and other teaching-related [assessments](#)) developed by the Teaching and Learning Transformation Center.

Flexibility in Workload Assignments

The OFA recognizes that faculty members may face a range of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unit Heads may employ flexible strategies regarding faculty instructional and service assignments on a temporary basis. For example, Unit Heads might enable senior faculty and/or faculty members with the capacity and willingness to take on additional assignments (e.g., more teaching and service) temporarily and in the short term. Conversely, Unit Heads might temporarily reduce faculty member committee assignments temporarily in recognition of COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges.

The OFA and ADVANCE issued [guidance](#) for unit heads regarding supports for faculty affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that Unit Heads may wish to consult.