

Guidance for administrators and members of promotion and tenure committees for 2023-2024

This document will be updated periodically. New or revised text appears in bold print in this document.

Rationale

The events of 2020/21 (i.e., COVID-19 pandemic, societal/racial tensions, political unrest) affected every aspect of the University's operations and, in turn, every faculty member. **Those impacts continue to this day and are expected to continue into the future.** In considering decisions about promotion and tenure, the University must evaluate a candidate's scholarship of teaching, research and creative accomplishments, service, librarianship, and patient care within the context of these events. Because the events of 2020/21 have had differential and negative impacts on faculty members' work and career development, decision-makers must take into account these differential impacts in assessing whether a faculty member's achievements merit promotion and/or tenure.

Per Penn State's [2023-2024 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines](#), tenure and promotion at Penn State is based "on recognized performance and achievement" (p.3); tenure is also based "on the potential for further achievement" (p. 3). During 2020/21, a faculty member's activities may have been altered or curtailed. Also, the available information about a faculty member's achievement and future trajectory, both qualitatively and quantitatively, may be affected and, in many cases, reduced. While the information available to make these important decisions about promotion and tenure may have changed due to the events of 2020/21, our standards and expectations have not changed. The University still demands excellence, as demonstrated by high-quality and impactful accomplishments in the areas of teaching, research, service, librarianship, and patient care. As outlined in [AC-23](#) (Promotion and Tenure Procedures and Regulations), administrators and members of promotion and tenure committees are asked to exercise their best academic judgment when evaluating faculty. The guidelines below outline how to evaluate individual faculty members holistically and within context.

These considerations will remain in place until there are no longer any candidates for tenure who were in the probationary period during calendar year 2020.

Guidelines

1. Recognize that events of 2020/21 (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, social/racial tensions, political unrest) have had a differential impact on faculty. Candidates were encouraged (but not required) to describe how these impacts influenced their teaching, research, and creative accomplishments, service, librarianship, and patient care in the narrative statement (see the document "[Guidance for Promotion and Tenure Narratives](#)"). Note the impacts described by the candidate and how the candidate is working to overcome these impacts. Information shared in narratives is to be used to contextualize a candidate's work during the pandemic, rather than to make negative judgments about it.
2. External reviewers are also asked to be mindful of how the events of 2020/21 may influence a candidate's achievement and trajectory. Language in the "Sample letters to external evaluators" was modified to remind reviewers of the impact of the events of 2020/21; see Appendix C of the [2023-2024 Promotion and Tenure Guidelines](#).
3. Consider the specific impacts COVID-19 has presented within a faculty member's discipline as well as within a faculty member's research program or creative practice. Discuss within the

committee challenges candidates may have faced. Committees at the first level review are asked to acknowledge such challenges were taken into consideration in their evaluation letters. If the committee does not have specific knowledge of the candidate's discipline, they should consult Section III.C.9 of the Administrative Guidelines for guidance on how to seek this expertise.

4. Be aware of how delivery of instruction and assessment of teaching effectiveness was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other events. Faculty members changed their teaching modality and engaged with students who were often highly stressed, an effort that took considerably more time and focus than in previous years. Changes were made to the assessment of teaching effectiveness as outlined in the document "Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness During COVID" **which can be found in Appendix M in the Administrative Guidelines**; these changes will be reflected in the dossier.
5. Be familiar with adjustments to the promotion and tenure process made due to COVID; these adjustments are reflected in the Promotion and Tenure Administration Guidelines and the P&T FAQ document, both of which can be found on the website of the [Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs](#).
6. Consider the effects of the events of 2020/21 relative to a candidate's career trajectory including the notion that impacts may extend both forward and backward. For example, a faculty member may have been working toward some culminating research achievement and thus the purpose of previous efforts may not be well reflected in the record. Or a faculty member's program of research may have stalled due to work conditions imposed by the pandemic or other circumstances.