

Committee Chair and Committee Member Engagement in the Tenure- line Promotion Review Process

Dr. Kathy Bieschke
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
September 19, 2023



PennState

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS

VPFA Website – vpfa.psu.edu



[Resources & Support](#) ▾

[Hiring & Appointments](#) ▾

[Reviews, Promotion, & Tenure](#) ▾

[Faculty Development & Recognition](#) ▾



Important Faculty News

[Guidance for Faculty Work from Outside the U.S.](#) (February 1, 2023)

Review the latest [Penn State Faculty News Digest](#) emails.

Visit Penn State's [official Coronavirus Information page](#) and our [COVID-19 Resources for Faculty page](#).

Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

The Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (OVPPFA) is dedicated to facilitating and promoting the success of all faculty members at Penn State over their careers.



OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS

VPFA Office Staff



PennState
Faculty Affairs

**Office of the
Vice Provost
for Faculty
Affairs**

vpfa.psu.edu

- **Ann Clements**, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Faculty Development, acc13@psu.edu
- **Abigail Diehl**, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, agc105@psu.edu
 - Primary contact for the promotion process for non-tenure-line faculty
- **Karen Parkes-Schnure**, Executive Assistant to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, kjg138@psu.edu
- **Christine Luzier**, Administrative Support Coordinator, cal89@psu.edu
- **Wendy Blumenthal**, Administrative Support Assistant, wjy100@psu.edu



Resources



PennState
Faculty Affairs

Administrative Guidelines

- How we operationalize AC23
- A comprehensive document with some changes made each academic year
- Important to know about AC23 and the guidelines –at vpfa.psu.edu



Guidelines



Frequently Asked Questions

- Last updated in July 2023, the P&T FAQ document on the VPFA website contains 84 questions and answers.
- Note: The FAQ document is a resource, but not policy. Follow AC23 and the Administrative Guidelines, in addition to the policies of your college, campus, school, and department.
- Like the Administrative Guidelines, the current FAQ has changes from last year.
- Contact academic unit head or VPFA if you cannot find an answer to your question!



Impact of COVID-19 and Other Events of 2020

- *Changes to P&T Administrative Guidelines and FAQs*
- *Guidance documents*
 - [Guidance for administrators and members of P&T committees for 2023-2024](#)
 - [Guidance for promotion and tenure narratives](#)
- *For tenure-line faculty in their probationary period in calendar year 2020:*
 - [Guidance regarding a one-year extension due to COVID-19](#)
 - [FAQs pertaining to the guidance](#)
 - [COVID extension fact sheet \(June 2022\)](#)



Other resources

- A [Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees](#) can be found on the VPFA website
- Guidance on the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness-Guidance can be found in the 2023-2024 Administrative Guidelines



Process of Review



PennState
Faculty Affairs

Charge

- A [Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees](#) can be found on the VPFA website
 - Familiar with unit and university p&t documents
 - Determine the meeting modality at the first meeting
 - Declare conflicts of interest
 - May only vote if present for discussion
 - Maintain confidentiality about deliberations
 - Consultation must occur if disagreeing with previous review
 - Review to focus on unit criteria: confine review to contents of dossier and work with the relevant administrator to obtain needed information
 - Every level of review must have access to the same information; additions to dossier due no later than February 1
 - Committee members should give due consideration to disciplinary experts



Process of Review

- Prior to the first meeting, committee members must determine whether to meet in person or virtually for all the committee meetings that involve discussion of a candidate.
- Conflict of interest should be declared:
 - Committee members may be recused only when there is a legitimate conflict of interest, such as a relative being considered for promotion or tenure. Conflicts of interest are to be declared in advance of discussion about a candidate. If there is a recusal, the reason might be noted in the evaluative statement. A committee member who is recused should not be present for the discussion or the vote.
- Only those members present for the discussion of a candidate may vote on the candidate.
- All aspects of the promotion and tenure process are confidential. Confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process is to be respected forever, not just during the particular year of review.



Confidentiality

- I.E.2. (Pages 2-3) – Language that affirms that promotion and tenure is a confidential process and that all parties (committee members, administrators, and candidates) are expected to maintain confidentiality.
- Throughout the review process, the privacy rights of individuals shall be respected.
- External evaluators shall not be identified in evaluative statements prepared by review committees or administrators.



Added language to FAQ #28

- *If a faculty member is on paid or unpaid leave of any kind, may the faculty member serve on a promotion and tenure review committee?*

No, while on leave, including sabbatical leave, faculty members may not participate on promotion and tenure review committees. **Faculty members on leave are not expected to complete assigned tasks during the leave.** The academic unit should respect the purposes of the leave, including sabbatical leave, and there should be no expectation that faculty on sabbatical leave donate their research time for department service of any kind. (Pages 16-17, IV.C. for a discussion of the selection and appointment of review committees). **This is fair to both the faculty member and to the candidates under review as an inconsistent application of this expectation can lead to inequities.** Academic units should carefully consider whether to allow a faculty member on a one-semester leave in the spring semester to serve on a promotion and tenure committee that may be called back into service while the faculty member is on leave in the spring as the faculty member would not be able to participate in any discussions, meetings, or votes.



COVID-Specific Charge Items

- Recognize that events of 2020/21 had differential impact on faculty
- External reviewers were asked to be mindful about how the events of 2020/2021 might influence achievement and trajectory
- Consider specific impacts with a faculty candidate's discipline, research program, or creative practice.
- Be aware the delivery of instruction and assessment of teaching effectiveness were affected.
- Be familiar with adjustments to the P&T process due to COVID.
- Consider that the impact of events in 2020/2021 might extend backwards and forward.



Review Process -Provisional

(prior to tenure review)

- For provisional year (i.e., prior to the final sixth-year, or for the College of Medicine the ninth-year, and early) tenure reviews
 - The unit committee reviews in accordance with AC 23.
 - The college review committee may, but is not required to, conduct a review.
 - It is common for college committees to not review dossiers for the second year reviews
 - It is uncommon? unheard of? for college committees to not review dossiers for the fourth year review
- If the dean is considering termination of a faculty member after any provisional reviews despite positive recommendations from both the department committee and the department head, then the dossier must also be reviewed by the college committee prior to the dean acting.



Review Process - Final Year

(early tenure or tenure review)

- For final (sixth-year or ninth-year at the College of Medicine) and early tenure reviews and promotion of tenure-line faculty, the following committees, and administrators shall conduct reviews:
 - Campus review committee, if appropriate;
 - Campus chancellor, if appropriate;
 - Secondary department head, if appropriate;
 - Department review committee, if appropriate;
 - Department head, if appropriate;
 - College review committee, if appropriate;
 - College dean;
 - The University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee, for candidates receiving positive recommendations from the dean (or all positive reviews prior to the dean's review);
 - The Executive Vice President and Provost, for those candidates reviewed by the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee;
 - Approval or disapproval of recommendations for those candidates reviewed by the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee shall be the responsibility of the President of the University.



Role of Review Committees

- Review committees shall give special attention to the **candidate's assignment and the mission of the unit** in applying criteria and expectations.
- Review committees (at all levels) shall render an **independent judgment** of the candidates being reviewed.
- Academic administrators and review committees are expected to **consult as needed**.



Independent Judgements

- Each unit shall review its procedures to assure that they protect the independence of review committees from undue administrative influence.
 - Administrators shall not be present during review discussions or when votes are being taken. Administrators may be invited for consultation if the committee deems it appropriate.
- Academic administrators should not be appointed to committees or be present for discussion or votes.



Review Criteria

- At each level of review, special emphasis shall be given to the particular criteria and expectations for that level of review, consistent with the three general criteria.
- For candidates who have completed interdisciplinary work, special attention shall be given to evaluating the quality and significance of such work.
- Reviewers at each level of review shall exercise professional judgment about the accomplishments and potential of each candidate as follows:
 - **Campus reviews of University College faculty, or tenure-track faculty at a University Park college but residing at a non-University Park location:** All criteria should be evaluated.
 - **Department:** All criteria should be evaluated.
 - **College:** Review campus and/or department recommendations in light of:
 - College criteria and expectations;
 - Equity among departments; and
 - Procedural fairness.
 - **University:** Review all previous recommendations in light of:
 - University criteria and expectations;
 - Equity within and among colleges; and
 - Procedural fairness.



COVID-19 Guidance for First Level of Review

- 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.
- See [Guidance for administrators and members of P&T committees](#)



Stays of Tenure

- Faculty members granted stays of tenure or leave may include additional evaluations beyond five years to provide sufficient evidence of evaluations or teaching assessment.
- No discussion of stays should appear in the dossiers.
- Stays are given for legitimate reasons and vetted through my office; the length of the probationary period is irrelevant to the judgment being made.
 - From letter to external reviewers: Recognizing the disruption to the scholarly, instructional, and service activities of faculty members due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest in spring 2020, Penn State provided candidates for promotion and tenure the option to extend their tenure clock by one year. Candidates for promotion and tenure may also receive additional stays of the tenure clock according to university policy. Our policy states that the criteria for promotion and tenure at The Pennsylvania State University are the same for all faculty members regardless of length of service during the probationary period.



Extension to the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19

Penn State extended the provisional tenure period starting with the 2020-2021 academic year for all faculty in their pre-tenure probationary period, as defined in University policy AC23. As of September 15, 2020, the University announced that all tenure-line faculty in their probationary period during the calendar year 2020 are eligible to confirm acceptance of the one-year COVID-19 extension.

See [Guidance for Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19](#) and [FAQ](#) document.



Time in Rank

In their evaluations of candidates for promotion, committees and administrators shall understand that time-in-rank is not a criterion; it is incumbent on the reviewers to provide persuasive documentation for promotion recommendations that differ significantly from normal promotion patterns for a campus, department, or college.



Evaluative Statements (letters)

- Each review committee shall **summarize in writing** the independent evaluation of a candidate on each of the three criteria specified in AC23. If promotion and tenure considerations are simultaneous (and we ask that the criteria be the same for both so they should be), both decisions should be addressed in a single letter from committee chairs and administrators.
 - Each evaluative statement shall be signed and dated; for committee statements, the name and rank of each member shall be listed and the statement shall be signed by at least the committee chair.
 - For committee recommendations, the numerical vote shall be reported in the evaluative statement.
 - When a committee has not reached a unanimous vote on a candidate, the evaluative statement shall include a discussion of the reasons for divergent opinions, often a majority and a minority opinion.
 - Letters from the unit and college committee should be addressed to the dean.
- Review committees and administrators at each succeeding level of review shall be responsible for reviewing preceding committee and administrator evaluative statements.



FAQ #19

When is it appropriate for a committee member to abstain from voting on a candidate who is under review for promotion and/or tenure?

Committee members should **not abstain**. Committee members may recuse only when there is a legitimate conflict of interest, such as a relative being considered for promotion or tenure or if there was significant collaboration with the candidate. Members are encouraged to disclose possible conflicts of interest to the unit head and seek consultation about how to best manage the conflict. Conflicts of interest should be declared prior to the discussion of any candidate and members will be recused from the discussion and voting.



Consultation

- Is required when there is a potential for disagreement between the current level of review and the previous level of review.
- Initiating a consultation does not mean there will be a disagreement.
- If a consultation occurs, resulting letters should reflect a consultation occurred and should provide a brief description of the issues discussed.
- Previous levels of review **MAY NOT** change their letters as a result of a consultation



Special Situations



PennState
Faculty Affairs

Faculty on Joint Appointments

- For faculty members holding joint appointments in two or more colleges, the positive recommendation shall be forwarded by the college responsible for the largest share of the salary.
- If the dean of a college delegates the identification of external referees to the head of the department, and the faculty member being reviewed is on a permanently budgeted joint appointment, the department head should consult with the head of the secondary unit. The department head of the secondary unit is required to submit a letter for the dossier. Before writing that letter, the head of the secondary department should be given the complete dossier for review.
- If the secondary department head chooses to consult with a departmental promotion and tenure committee before writing the letter, the dossier should be shared with that unit as well. (However, in no case will the committee of the secondary unit be invited to submit a letter of recommendation on its own.) The letter from the secondary department head will appear in the dossier in front of the primary department head's letter, but it should be made available to the promotion and tenure committee of the primary department before it begins its review. If the primary department head disagrees with the secondary department head, consultation should occur between the two department heads.
- If a faculty member is co-funded in an inter-college consortia or institute, satisfactory progress in fulfilling the objectives agreed to by the college and consortia upon appointment will be necessary for the college to retain that co-funding. However, promotion and tenure are decisions determined by criteria set in the department and college; input from the consortia or institute is not required, but if input is sought, a given college must do so consistently for all candidates with that college.
- 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 their letter for any promotion or tenure review and copy the secondary on all communications. If the dean of the primary college disagrees with the dean of the secondary college, consultation should occur between the deans.



Promotion to Full Considerations

- There is a nomination process for the consideration of review.
- Committees must consist of only full professors.
- The dossier follows the same pathway as it did for tenure.
- When a tenured faculty member is being reviewed for promotion (unrelated to a tenure review), or an untenured faculty member is being reviewed for promotion prior to tenure, once the dossier has been prepared, reviewed, and signed by the candidate and submitted to the first review committee for consideration, the dossier cannot be withdrawn before action by the dean, unless the candidate so desires. If the department committee and the department head do not support a promotion after reviewing the completed dossier, the candidate should be so informed and given the option of withdrawing their candidacy. Prior to informing the candidate, the department head is to consult with the dean.





PennState
Faculty Affairs

Thank You.
Questions or Comments

vpfa.psu.edu/promotion-and-tenure



PennState

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS