FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PROMOTION AND TENURE 2021-2022

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CONFIDENTIALITY

1. *What is confidentiality in relation to the promotion and tenure process?*

Confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process is to be respected forever, not just during that particular year of review. Members of promotion and tenure committees participate with the understanding that all matters related to their deliberations remain confidential. In addition, faculty candidates under review are discouraged from approaching committee members at any time concerning the disposition of their review and should understand that inquires of this type are deemed entirely inappropriate.

It is expected that both the candidates and the committees will adhere to the confidentiality of the promotion and tenure process. (Pages 2-3, I.E.)

THE DOSSIER

2. *Most Colleges are now using Activity Insight (Digital Measures by Watermark) to generate dossiers. How does the use of Activity Insight impact the dossier and review process?*

Activity Insight is a tool for generating the dossier. The output is consistent with the expectations outlined in the dividers as well as with the Administrative Guidelines.

3. *Who is responsible for the preparation of the dossier?*

That responsibility is assigned to the department head (or director of academic affairs or division head), **and** the faculty member must cooperate by assembling whatever materials are in his or her possession by the timeline given by the department head. **If the unit is using Activity Insight to generate the dossier, faculty members are responsible for ensuring their information is entered into Activity Insight in accordance with the timeline specified.** (Page 7, III.B.4.; page 12, III.E.1)

4. *Besides letters from external reviewers, can there be material included in the dossier that is not made available to the candidate for review when he or she signs the signature statement?*

Only the material identified in the *Administrative Guidelines* on page 9, III.C.2.l. (external letters of assessment), is listed as confidential and excluded from the candidate's review or inspection. Before the dossier goes to the committee, the candidate signs a statement that they have reviewed all materials in the dossier, with the exception of that section. If material is added to the dossier afterwards, excluding the committee and administrative letters, the candidate should be so informed and be able to review it. (page 12, III.F.; page 46, Appendix F.)

5. *Can there be internal letters, outside of the required committee and administrative letters, added to the dossier, and can these be confidential?*

If the unit feels that important information can be added to the dossier by seeking an occasional letter internal to the unit, the entire letter (not a summary or selective sections from it) should be included in

the dossier, in the section which it addresses most significantly, and it should therefore be reviewed by the candidate with the rest of the contents of the dossier preceding section l. (Page 8, III.C.2.K.; page 10, III.C.9)

6. *If candidates disagree with statements by peer or internal reviewers, may they ask that they be removed or write a rebuttal?*

If statements are factually inaccurate, candidates should discuss their concerns with the department head who should do what is possible to correct factual errors. However, if the disagreement is with the evaluation itself, there should be no change, and no rebuttal. Candidates sign they have reviewed the dossier, not that they agree with any assessments made in it. If they feel that something about their intentions or methodology needs to be clarified, they may address that in their narrative statement. (Pages 8, III.C.2.d.)

7. *Can information be added to the dossier after the department committee has reviewed it, and if so, must the committee meet again to review the dossier and write a new letter?*

It is not appropriate to add information to the dossier after it has been reviewed if that information was available at the time the dossier was assembled and reviewed, unless a significant error had been made. However, until February 1, if there are new achievements that might have an impact on the record–a judgment will need to be made by the appropriate administrator–then that information must be sent back to all who have already acted on the dossier. If the new information has no impact on the recommendation, then that is all that need be indicated. (Page 12, III.F.)

8. *Can a dossier be withdrawn after it has been sent forward for review?*

Once a dossier has been completed and the candidate has signed that they reviewed it, and the peer review committee begins its review, the formal process has begun. However, if it is a promotion review only, and if the peer review committee does not recommend promotion and the department head agrees, **after consulting with the dean of the academic unit** the head should discuss with the candidate the advisability of withdrawing the dossier from further consultation. (Page 20, V.D.)

9. *Section II.D says that "It is expected that units encourage and support collaborative and interdisciplinary research, and that units will develop methods to assess these activities." How are such measures to be presented in the dossier?*

The unit should address what potential measures could or should be used in its criteria statement/guidelines. Because interdisciplinary team research involves multiple authors (papers and publications) and/or investigators (grant awards), best practices suggest committees identify how candidates can document their roles in collaborative products. In addition, if publications in the major journals in the field are an indication of quality, then those journals should be listed in the guidelines. Interdisciplinary team science often means that individuals are publishing in outlets other than the major journals in their own field and information on the quality of outlets beyond the candidate's major field should be provided. In the dossier itself, those achievements should be itemized in section II.D. If citation indices are being used, the results should be presented in objective form in this section. (Page 6-7, II.D.)

10. *Are there other places where unit-specific criteria might result in a listing that does not appear in the bullets on the dividers? For example, there seems to be no place listed for conference proceedings, which have a particular value in certain disciplines. Might such a category be added as an additional bullet by a unit?*

The simple answer is yes, if done selectively and with care, and if the new bullet is put in the most appropriate place in the dossier. In the example above, the University assumption is that an article that appeared in conference proceedings would be listed as a refereed or non-refereed article, depending on where it is most appropriate, in the already existing lists, but if a unit feels that it would be best to separate conference proceedings out as a separate category, or as a sub-category, it should feel free to do that. (Similarly, a unit might want to separate out what it considers to be notes, rather than articles, into a separate listing or subcategory.) (Page 6-7, II.D.; page 9, III.C.7.)

11. Can peer review letters be written by academic administrators?

This is acceptable according to our *Guidelines* and is most often seen in teaching evaluations. (Page 50, "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," Appendix F)

12. Do refereed publications need to be verified?

Regardless of the outlet for articles published (electronically or print), the assumption is that the status of the category used for the listing (refereed status, editorial board, etc.) are authenticated and verified before including in the listing. Articles posted electronically by the individual faculty member without a formal review are not to be listed in the dossier. (Page 9, III.C.7)

13. What happens when a tenure-eligible faculty member in their tenure-review year fails to submit a dossier?

If a tenure-eligible faculty member in their tenure-review year fails to fulfill the responsibilities of submitting a dossier, withdraws their dossier or otherwise does not comply with the procedural requirements of AC23 prior to a final decision on tenure, the faculty member will be deemed to have voluntarily resigned from their tenure-eligible appointment and will be terminated on June 30 of the current academic year.

14. If items presented in the dossier are in another language, should they be translated?

Ideally all (but at least half) of the materials sent to external reviewers must be translated in English. The original materials should also be sent to external reviewers. The College makes the arrangements and pays for/covers the cost of the translations. The candidate is given the opportunity to review the translations and the translations should become part of the supplemental materials. If not all of the articles are translated at least one, ideally more, of the external reviewers must be able to read the language the materials are written in. The College may also ask a Penn State employee who can read the language the materials are written in to serve as an internal reviewer and verify that that the materials are consistent with how they are represented in the dossier. This internal review letter becomes part of the dossier and the candidate has access to the letter.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TENURE AND PROMOTION

15. What is the current thinking about the relationship between tenure and promotion?

While a faculty member could be promoted without being tenured, the presumption is that a faculty member whose achievements and promise make him or her tenurable should also be promoted out of the assistant professor rank. If a committee or administrator would recommend that an assistant professor be tenured but not promoted, the burden would be on them to make the argument for the special circumstance that merits such separation. (Page 11, III.C.12.c.; page 19, V.C.1; page 22, V.H.3.)

PEER REVIEW COMMITTEES

16. What are the key elements of the charge to a committee?

Please see the Recommended Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees on the VPFA website (vpfa.psu.edu).

17. 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 **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.** (Page 22, V.H.3.e.)

18. How should a tie vote at a committee level review be treated?

It is recommended in the *Administrative Guidelines* that in order to avoid tie votes, committees should have an odd number of members. However, on a rare occasion when a tie vote occurs at a committee level of review (most likely due to an abstention), that tie vote is treated as a negative recommendation under both AC-23 and the *Administrative Guidelines*. Therefore, in such circumstance, the committee chair should mark the "Not Recommended" block on the Promotion and Tenure Form. (Page 15, IV.B.2)

19. Who has responsibility for writing the committee letter, and what should it include?

The chair of the committee has responsibility for writing the letter with input from the committee. If there is disagreement on the decision reached for a particular candidate, the minority opinion must be included in the committee's letter. Only one letter is written and it should contain the committee's singular overall vote count. The letter should not contain separate vote counts for each of the three evaluative criteria. If there are abstentions, the general reasons for the abstentions might also be included. These same procedures should be followed for second- and fourth-year reviews. (Pages 24-25, V.I.)

20. Is it appropriate for a faculty member to serve on a peer review committee when that faculty member is also being reviewed for promotion to professor?

There is nothing in AC-23 or the *Administrative Guidelines* that prohibits this although it is not a practice that we encourage. It is possible to allow the faculty member to serve on the committee and then to step out when his or her case is being considered. However, individual units might have their own guidelines or practices to avoid the potential awkwardness of this situation. (See page 1, I.B., for a discussion of applicability of guidelines and improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the review process.)

21. Should there be separate committees for tenure and promotion at the various levels?

No, we assume that single committees decide all tenure and promotion cases in a given year at each level, and that both decisions are addressed in a single letter from each committee. The exception would

be when additional senior faculty need to be added to the senior faculty on a promotion and tenure committee in order to consider a candidate for promotion to senior rank. Members below the rank to which a faculty member is being recommended should be excluded from deliberations and are ineligible to vote on such promotion cases. (Pages 14-17, IV.)

22. Are there policy restrictions on committee members serving while on sabbatical leaves?

Although a faculty member may serve on a peer review committee while on a sabbatical leave, as long as it is still possible to participate fully in the deliberations **in the mode chosen by the committee, it is discouraged.** The department should respect the purposes of the sabbatical and there should be no expectation that faculty on sabbatical leave donate their research time for department service of any kind. (See page 15-16, IV.C. for a discussion of selection and appointment of review committees.)

23. Are college committees informed of the dean's recommendations on cases going forward for University-level review?

The disposition of a candidate's case is a confidential matter. Therefore, there is no duty for a dean to inform the college committee on whether a case is proceeding to the University-level of review. However, should a confidential consultation occur between the dean and the college committee, the natural flow of dialogue often includes a sense of what the dean's decision(s) will likely be. (Pages 22-23, V.H.)

24. What is the thinking on allowing academic administrators, or individuals who report directly to the dean, to serve on peer review committees?

This is prohibited by our *Guidelines*. The problem is that an individual who reports directly to the administrator (one who does have line responsibility) may well bring that administrator's point of view into the committee room. Moreover, the administrator's presence on the committee might make some committee members feel that they do not have the necessary independence they need to say things and to act in ways that might displease the administrator. (Page 16-17, IV.E.)

25. Should committee members retain personal faculty notes?

Committee members should not retain personal faculty notes. The University does NOT consider the personal faculty notes of committee members to be official University records. These personal notes must be securely destroyed beyond recovery immediately after the committee has reached a decision or concluded the promotion and tenure process.

26. What are best practice guidelines for committees that meet virtually?

Prior to the committee's first meeting, committee members must determine whether to meet in-person or virtually for all of the committee's meetings that involve discussions about candidates. Promotion and Tenure committees may not meet via a hybrid approach (i.e., with some members in person and some virtual). (V.E.1) unless granted an exception by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Committees that decide to meet virtually must attend to security considerations to ensure confidentiality of discussions and voting. The committee chair should discuss the virtual process prior to the first meeting (how entry and exit are managed, how voting will proceed, and confidentiality considerations). It is not permitted to record meetings. Meetings should have a waiting room; the committee chair should check attendees into the meeting. All participants

should authenticate their identity, either by enabling their video or providing the phone number from which they will be calling in advance of the meeting. Participants should attend the meeting from a location where others are not present and be prepared for unlikely scenarios such as Zoom crashing, chair or participants losing connection, etc. In cases of conflicts of interest, attendees must be checked out of meeting and checked back in. Documents should be available in a secure platform. For committees that vote by secret ballot, a method must be constructed to collect votes for each case under consideration. No discussion about candidates may occur via email and only those present for the discussion of a candidate may vote on a candidate.

CRITERIA AND EXPECTATIONS

27. How are entries in the dossier to be weighted?

Neither AC23 nor the *Administrative Guidelines* assign weights to any item in the dossier. It is expected that each administrator and committee will weigh the evidence presented in the dossier, according to its own criteria and expectations, to judge the extent to which it demonstrates excellence in each area. Each subsequent level of review is dependent on the discipline itself, and its guidelines and criteria statements, to indicate the importance of items listed in the dossier, and to explain its judgment in the committee and administrator letters that evaluate the candidate's achievements. (Pages 3-7, II.)

28. Can collegiality be a factor in tenure reviews?

If collegiality is to be considered as a factor, it should be according to its impact on the candidate's contributions to one or more of the three cells evaluated in the dossier. For example, a candidate's lack of collegiality, defined as the ability to collaborate and cooperate constructively, can be addressed in the teaching cell when it impinges on his or her ability to work with colleagues in advising students or in preparing them for prerequisites for more advanced courses, or in preparing them for group activities required of the academic discipline; or in the research cell when it impinges on the candidate's ability to work collaboratively with colleagues in developing research or creative activities, or in creating grant proposals or organizing conferences; or in service when it prevents departmental committees or programs from functioning as they should.

At the same time, we need to heed the warning from the 1999 AAUP report, that "invoking collegiality as a separate element can ensure homogeneity and threaten academic freedom. Moreover, it can be confused with the expectation that a faculty member exhibit enthusiasm, dedication, a constructive attitude, and a willingness to defer to the judgments of superiors." (*Chronicle for Higher Education*, September 22, 1999)

29. How are deans (primary and secondary) of a faculty member jointly appointed in two colleges informed of the process?

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 his or her letter for any promotion or tenure review and copy the secondary on all communications. (Page 21, V. F.4.)

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR TEACHING

30. What is appropriate to include in the dossier in the way of peer reviews of teaching?

Full peer review reports of teaching should be included in their entirety in the dossier–not just a summary of the evaluation. (Pages 4-6, II.C.)

31. Who can conduct peer reviews of teaching?

Unless determined by the unit's governance procedures, peer reviews of teaching are arranged by the department head or the director of academic affairs or the division head, who can ask that they be conducted by any faculty member in the department. (Page 5, II.C.c.)

32. Are peer reviews of teaching accessible for review by the candidate at the time when the candidate signs that he or she has reviewed the dossier?

Yes, peer reviews of teaching are accessible for review by the candidate. (Page 9, III.C.3.)

33. What is appropriate to include in the dossier in the way of student reviews of teaching?

The overall SRTE scores for instructor and course for each course reviewed must be presented. For provisional faculty, SRTE results from all sections of all courses should be included; courses taught at other institutions or at Penn State during non-tenure-eligible appointments should not be included. In addition, there must be at least one other method (such as summary of student comments) for presenting student evaluations of teaching. (Pages 4-5, II.C.1; pages 28-34, Appendix A.)

34. Where can the candidate address the issue of his or her teaching?

According to legislation of the University Faculty Senate, the issue may be addressed in the narrative statement and the alternative assessment required as of fall 2021. The issue may also be addressed in supplementary material provided, such as a teaching portfolio. (Pages 4-5, II.C.1.b; page 8, III.C.2.e; pages 9, III.C.5.)

35. When a previous promotion occurred five or more years ago, how far back may one go in regard to including teaching and service information?

Our Guidelines do not specify or mandate a minimum number of years as there is no requirement for time-in-rank to be promoted. Normally, teaching assessments or evaluations and service activities since the last **formal** review are included. To provide sufficient evaluations of teaching and service, a faculty member may choose to report information about teaching and service for up to 10 of the most recent consecutive years since the last formal review. If using Digital Measures/Activity Insight, be aware that course and SRTE data may only be available from 2011 and onwards. If a faculty member would like to include course and SRTE data prior to 2011, such data can be entered manually or the faculty member can work with the Faculty Activity Management Services Team (L-AI-Support@lists.psu.edu) to enter the data. When running the University Dossier report in Activity Insight, please note that Teaching and Service sections will reflect the data entered for the time period selected while the research section will include information that spans the faculty member's entire career. (Page 11, III.C.12.b.) What is appropriate to include in the dossier in the way of student narrative comments?

If including student narrative comments in the dossier, these should be summarized rather than inserting all or a selection of the narrative comments. This summary can be prepared by the department head, division head, director of academic affairs or a department head's administrative or faculty delegate. Sometimes this may be done in consultation with the chair of the department's promotion and tenure committee in order to ensure consistency in presentation. A candidate should not be involved in preparing the summary of student comments. (Page 4, II.C.1.a.1.)

PROVISIONAL REVIEWS (Prior to sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine, and early)

36. Can a candidate be terminated as a result of a second- or fourth-year review, or third- or sixth-year reviews at the College of Medicine, (or special third- or fifth-year review, or special fourth-, seventh- or eighth-year review at the College of Medicine)? Don't we guarantee our candidates a sixth-year review, or ninth-year review at the College of Medicine?

There is no such guarantee–only that for candidates who are on the tenure track a tenure decision will be made by the end of the sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine. However, a decision not to continue a faculty member on the tenure track can be made during an earlier review. (Pages 17-26, V.)

37. Must second- and fourth-year reviews (and special third- and fifth-year reviews) be reviewed by the college committee? For the College of Medicine third- and sixth-year (and special fourth-, fifth- seventh- or eighth-year reviews).

The use of the college committee in second- and fourth-year reviews, (or third- and sixth-year reviews at the College of Medicine) is at the discretion of the dean, but the dean should seek the advice of the college committee before terminating as a result of a provisional review. (Page 18, V.B.2.)

38. What is the timing of a decision to terminate in provisional years in regard to the candidate having an additional year of employment?

Any notice after March 1 of the first year requires the additional year. (Page 22, V.H.3.)

39. When is it appropriate to call for a special third- or fifth-year review, or at the College of Medicine a fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, or eighth-year review?

A dean may require a special review when, as a result of the second- or fourth-year (or at the College of Medicine a third- or sixth-year) review, the record is judged to be strong enough to merit continuation but weak enough to suggest that without measurable progress by the following academic year termination from the tenure-track would be an appropriate action. Deans may call for such a review as a result of a recommendation from the department head or the department or college committees, but they need not accept such recommendations and may decide to terminate or continue without such a review. At the same time, there is no requirement that a provisional candidate be given a special third- or fifth-year review before termination, and the call for a special review should not be a substitute for making a negative decision when a candidate has not been making satisfactory progress. Third- and fifth-year reviews, or fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, or eighth-year review at the College of Medicine, for candidates who continue on the tenure-track become part of the permanent dossier that builds towards the final, sixth-year decision or ninth-year at the College of Medicine. (Pages 18, V.B.2.)

CONSULTATION

40. When do the department head and the dean need to consult with their committees? Can the department head, dean, or the committees redo their letters as a result of this consultation?

All reviewing agents, administrators, or committees must consult with the unit that made the prior recommendation if they seek clarification or if they render a contrary recommendation or decision. They must call for that consultation only after they have received the review letters from the previous

reviewers, but before they write their own, and those letters cannot be changed as a result of the consultation. The purpose of the review is to insure that the current reviewer fully understands the reasons that the previous one used to reach a decision that may be divergent before rendering final judgment, but there is no opportunity for the current reviewer to influence or pressure the previous one into changing the already considered and written recommendation. In addition, for candidates holding joint appointments, prior to writing the evaluative letter, the dean of the primary college must consult with the dean of the secondary college. (Page 22, V.H.3.)

THE UNIVERSITY PROMOTION AND TENURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

41. Are all sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine, and promotion decisions reviewed by the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee?

A positive tenure or promotion recommendation from the dean must be reviewed by the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee, as well as by the Provost and President. A negative decision by the dean is final, unless all other committees and administrators prior to the dean have been positive. (Page 19, V.B.4.h-j.)

EARLY TENURE, TIME TOWARD TENURE, AND IMMEDIATE TENURE

42. I have heard that bringing faculty members up for early tenure is discouraged. Is it still possible, and if so under what circumstances?

There is a sense in which it is discouraged, since the normal provisional period is seven years, over which time we have an opportunity to measure candidates' abilities to develop and sustain a tenurable record before investing a multi-million dollar commitment over the rest of their working lives at Penn State. At the same time, we should be willing to recognize special excellence or a circumstance when we see it, and our policies allow for early tenure decisions in those situations. Deans must make requests of the Provost's Office before undertaking early tenure reviews. (Page 59, Appendix H)

43. If a candidate is reviewed for early tenure and the decision is negative, can that individual be reviewed again in the sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine, or earlier? Is the candidate damaged for having had an earlier negative decision?

The candidate is not penalized in any way and may be reviewed again up through the sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine, without jeopardy to his or her case. Earlier external letters should be excluded from subsequent tenure reviews. (Page 59, Appendix H)

44. If a faculty member had been granted time towards tenure when hired, would he or she then have to pass the "exceptional" criteria before coming up for tenure at what would be early had she not been granted such time?

A faculty member who had time granted towards tenure upon hiring, presumably because he or she has already spent some time in provisional status in a previous institution, normally should not be coming up for "early tenure" at Penn State, but rather according to a normal timetable with the time granted towards tenure being listed as time earned towards tenure just as if such time were spent at Penn State. (See Policy AC 23, "Promotion and Tenure Regulations," Provisional or Pre-tenure Period, 5.)

45. Is it better to grant a faculty member with time on the tenure clock elsewhere time towards tenure or rather have them take no years towards tenure and then bring them up for early tenure?

That should be decided on a case-by-case basis, but units should not make it policy to refuse time towards tenure so that they have the most flexibility. This is not fair to a candidate who should have a clear sense of what the tenure clock would be, and who should not be in a position of being evaluated by the standard of an exceptionally strong case that early tenure decisions require. Nor is it fair to the unit, which should want to see a tenurable record built in what is close to a normal combined provisional period. Circumstances and the strength of a candidate's record should dictate how much time is granted towards tenure. (See reference above.)

46. What then are the expectations for immediate tenure?

Immediate tenure reviews are appropriate for persons being considered for faculty or academic administrative positions at the University. The immediate tenure process is not appropriate for faculty members or academic administrators already under contract. Immediate tenure may be granted to new faculty appointments, almost always when they have a tenured appointment at the institution they are leaving. **The immediate tenure process must begin prior to the candidate's start date.** Since we assume that they are being hired because they increase the excellence of the department, and that they are being recruited in a competitive market, we do not ask departments to slow the negotiations process by asking such faculty to develop full Penn State dossiers. They must, however, go through the full Penn State process, with the usual letters from the usual committees and administrators. In regard to external letters, while letters of reference used in the search process may be utilized, all four external letters must address the candidate's qualifications for tenure. Administrators are expected to consult with the chair of the unit's promotion and tenure committee to make the determination of whether the reference letters sufficiently address the criteria for tenure. If not, the college will have to request additional external letters. In addition, there needs to be evidence of good teaching before any new faculty member is granted tenure, such as a summary of student peer evaluations. What is presented for review is the candidate's vitae, four external letters, and evidence of good teaching, to which will be added in the review process the normal administrative and committee letters. The formal signatory page and dividers used in the standard promotion and tenure dossiers should not be used for immediate tenure cases. (Pages 55-57, Appendix I) The "out-of-sequence" process or a hybrid of the immediate tenure and the out-of-sequence processes should be utilized when there is a desire to hire individuals who do not currently have tenure at their home institution. Because out-of-sequence requests for promotion and tenure reviews will not be handled by the immediate tenure review process, please contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs to initiate this process. (See Appendix I and J.)

NOMINATION FOR PROMOTION

47. Can a candidate nominate himself for a review? If not, what has to happen before a candidate is considered for promotion?

A candidate can request to be considered for review, but that request does not by itself begin the review process. To begin the process, a candidate must be nominated by an appropriate academic administrator who would be in the review process, or by a peer review committee, in consultation with the department head. (Page 19-20, V.C.)

EXTERNAL LETTERS

48. How are external reviewers chosen?

External reviewers are chosen from a list of possibilities submitted by the candidate and another list compiled by the department head, usually in consultation with senior faculty in the field. It is best if the preponderance of external evaluators not be names that appeared solely on the list compiled by the

faculty member. At no point should the candidate be informed of the final list of evaluators who will be asked to contribute letters. (Pages 13-14, III.G.; page 55, dossier divider, "External Letters of Assessment," Appendix F)

49. The Guidelines say, in addition to former mentors and students, significant collaborators should not be external evaluators. What is meant by "significant?"

Disciplines will have to make that judgment, but clearly external evaluators should not be in the position of evaluating their own work in writing a letter about the quality of the candidate's publications, nor should they be such close collaborators that their objectivity will be questioned by those who read the dossier. (Letters of appreciation of the skill and achievement of a candidate by a collaborator, who might also comment on the particular nature of the candidate's contribution, may be solicited, but such letters would belong in the research section of the dossier, rather than in the section on external evaluations.) Collaborators are not meant to include editors of books or journals in which candidates have published, or co-researchers on a very large project, or one of a number of people who are listed as contributors to a book of conference proceedings. (Page 14, III.G.10.)

50. Can external letters be requested for provisional reviews prior to the sixth-year, or ninth-year at the College of Medicine, review?

We advise against this practice. Administrators who go back to fourth-year reviewers for sixth-year, or at the College of Medicine the sixth- and ninth-year, letters might be able to choose referees according to letters that were received previously. In addition, external referees might be confused by being asked to write letters in response to a tenure review after they had already written assessments in the fourth-year, or else they simply might refuse to write again. Departments are expected to make assessments of their provisional faculty on their own in accord with the criteria and guidelines established by the University, colleges, and departments. (See page 18, V.B.1-3., for a discussion of participants in provisional tenure reviews.)

51. What is the process for logging in external letters, even when a response is not received or in the case of a letter that is non-responsive?

The log should only include those evaluators who received items detailed in line 11 of the External Letters of Assessment section. Do not include preliminary requests made by telephone or by a brief e-mail in which potential referees are asked if they would be responsive to a formal written request. (Appendix F, Page 55, dossier divider, "External Letters of Assessment," bullet points 1 and 4; page 56, dossier divider, "Log of External Letters,")

52. Is it appropriate for candidates to contact external reviewers who may be asked by the department head to write a letter of assessment for them?

It is inappropriate for candidates to initiate any contact with external reviewers concerning their potential roles in the review process. Those units that feel it is a matter of courtesy for potential reviewers to be called in advance of receiving a letter requesting an assessment should make such calls through the dean or department head. Of course, any such preliminary contact with a potential reviewer should not give any indication of whether a positive or negative evaluation is desired. (Pages 13-14, III.G.)

53. Is it appropriate for peer review and administrator letters to quote directly from external letters?

Peer review and administrator letters may excerpt quotes from external letters as long as there is no reference to the referee's institution or other information that would violate the confidentiality of the referee. (See page 8, III.C.3. and Appendix C)

54. If we cannot get the required minimum of external letters, is it all right to have fewer letters?

Four letters are required, and every effort should be made to receive the minimum of four letters required by the University. If an evaluator who has promised to write a letter fails to deliver one, a substitute should be sought. It is therefore best to give yourself some leeway between when you are asking letters to be sent to you and when they are actually needed. (Page 13, III.G.4.)

55. Must external references come only from academe?

If there is a person of stature who is appropriate to write an external evaluation, even if he or she is not in the academy, that is acceptable. That should be the exception, though, and the preponderance of letters should be from people with the appropriate academic rank. (See pages 13-14, III.G. for a discussion of expectations of external evaluators.)

56. If a candidate had been reviewed two years ago, for example, is one required to solicit new external letters?

Yes. All letters should be fresh and newly solicited. The assumption is that something has happened in the past two years to require an updated assessment. (Page 13, III.G.1.)

TIMETABLE

57. What is the appropriate timetable of reviews?

The University timetable is printed annually in the *Administrative Guidelines*. Departments and colleges may set their own schedules in conjunction with the University timetable. Once a dossier has been reviewed and signed by the candidate, it is considered to be in the sequence for formal review. (Pages 35-36, Appendix B)

58. When are candidates informed about decisions?

Deans must send forward to the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee all dossiers that are still under consideration for positive decisions by March 1, and at that time they should tell candidates whether or not their dossiers have been sent forward. The only recommendation that they need share concerning the dossiers they are sending forward is the one that they themselves are making. Candidates who are reviewed by the University Committee and the Provost and President can expect to receive a letter from the President in mid-May. (Pages 24-25, V.I.2, 3 and 6.)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

59. Are there any limitations of what is to be included in the supplemental file?

We do not say what should be in the supplemental file, and leave that up to individual units, with the assumption that there should be consistency as to what is allowed from candidate to candidate. Units might want to make some suggestions as to what might be put on file (including any items that they want to mandate, such as copies of publications), and to say what may not be included (such as certain kinds of notes or e-mail messages), with the understanding that the administrator has the right and

responsibility to make other decisions on a case-by-case basis concerning whether submitted items are appropriate. (Page 9, III.C.5.)

STAYING OF THE PROVISIONAL TENURE PERIOD

60. What is appropriate to include in the dossier regarding staying of the provisional tenure period?

A staying of the provisional tenure period should not, in any way, penalize or adversely affect the faculty member during a tenure review and is intended to ensure equity in the tenure system. The signatory page of the dossier contains an area to indicate, as appropriate, the academic year of any granted staying of the provisional tenure period. This is the only place in the dossier in which this should be referenced. No reference to the reason or rationale for the stay should appear anywhere in the dossier (including on the promotion and tenure form). (Page 26-27, VI; Page 58, Appendix G.)

61. Are department promotion and tenure review committees involved in reviewing requests for staying of the provisional tenure period?

No. The reason or rationale for a stay is often quite personal and should be kept confidential. It would also be a conflict of interest for the department promotion and tenure review committee to have knowledge of the basis of such individual requests. (Page 26-27, VI; page 58, Appendix G)

ADJUSTMENTS DUE TO COVID-19

62. Where can I find out more about the extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19, including whether I'm eligible?

The extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 applies to any faculty member in the probationary period during the calendar year 2020. More information about the extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19 can be found in the administrative guidelines (Page 27, VII) and in the FAQs related to this guidance.

63. If a candidate takes the COVID-19 extension, will this be indicated on the P&T form?

The decision to take the COVID-19 extension will not be indicated on the P&T form.

64. Will the extension of the review period due to COVID-19 be mentioned in requests to reviewers?

While the extension of the probationary period due to COVID-19 is not a stay, the language pertaining to stays in request letters to external reviewers will be modified for those who were in the probationary period in calendar year 2020. This change will be implemented beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year as no one going up for promotion or tenure in fall 2020 confirmed the extension. The "Sample Letters to External Evaluators" was update with new language as of April 6, 2021 and will be maintained until there are no longer any candidates for tenure who were in the probationary period during calendar year 2020. See Appendix C.

65. 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" in Appendix H of the Administrative Guidelines.)

66. What is the best way to indicate on Activity Insight/the Dossier how COVID-19 impacted our teaching, research, and service activities?

Candidates for promotion and tenure were encouraged (but not required) to describe how the events of 2020/21 (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, societal/racial tensions, political unrest) impacted their work, and the steps they took to manage these impacts, in the narrative that accompanies their dossier for promotion and/or tenure.

67. May I list conference presentations that I was scheduled to deliver at meetings that were canceled due to COVID-19?

You may list your unattended conference presentations along with a comment that the presentation was "accepted but not delivered due to COVID-19."

68. While SRTEs will be administered in spring and summer of 2020, results will not be available to academic administrators. May I still include my SRTEs for spring 2020 in my dossier?

Only courses taught will be automatically added to a faculty member's Activity Insight record. SRTEs will not be included in Activity Insight for any faculty member. Some faculty may want to include their spring 2020 SRTEs in their promotion dossiers. However, the inclusion of spring 2020 SRTEs by some, but not others, compromises the spirit of equity and fairness because questions likely will be raised about why other faculty choose to omit them. As a result, it is recommended that only in the rarest of circumstances should a faculty member include them, such as if there is a specific need to demonstrate achievement in response to specific guidance for improvement.

69. The short-form of the SRTE was administered in fall 2020. These results were not available to academic administrators. May I include my SRTEs for fall 2020 in my dossier?

Yes, you may. In addition, all faculty are to include an alternative assessment for the fall 2020 semester. More detail about the impact of COVID on the assessment of teaching effectiveness can be found in the 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines in section II.C.2.

70. How will peer teaching reviews in spring of 2020, fall 2021, and spring 2021? be handled in the promotion and tenure review process? ?

Tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty routinely undergo peer review of teaching and contribute to peer review of teaching committees. In acknowledgement of the COVID-19 crisis and its extraordinary impacts on our faculty, and our collective shift to a remote learning environment, Penn State suspended peer review of teaching, as of March 16, for Spring semester 2020. As outlined in the 2021-2022 Promotion and Tenure Administrative Guidelines (II.C.2), the omission of a peer teaching observation does not provide any evidence relevant to the assessment of teaching effectiveness A faculty member who believe the absence of spring 2020 semester peer observation(s) would create a significant gap in their dossier may have proceeded with having a peer assess their spring 2020 course materials , consistent with the unit guidelines outlined for peer teaching review, but this was not required.

Peer teaching review was not suspended for fall of 2020 or spring 2021 and was expected to occur. Note that per the 2021-2022 Administrative Guidelines (p. 5, II.C.1.c.), peer review can consist of wide range of activities that may (or may not) include class visitation. Members of the department/division/school/campus promotion and tenure committee in consultation with the department head/director of academic affairs/chief academic officer/school director/division head were expected to review whether existing guidelines for peer teaching review should be modified in light of the pandemic. Committees were asked to wish to address issues including whether to modify 1) how peer teaching reviews are conducted, including whether review of course materials or a teaching portfolio may replace a teaching observation given remote learning delivery; and 2) the total number of peer reviews required for the formal review given the suspension of peer teaching reviews in spring 2020.

Faculty within the unit were to be provided with specific instructions about how to proceed with peer reviews so that expectations are clear to both committee members and faculty and any changes to unit guidelines must be reflected in the letter from department/division/school/campus promotion and tenure committee and the department head/director of academic affairs/chief academic officer/school director/division head.

71. I've had several class observations this semester for the fourth-year review that was to take place in academic year 2020-2021. If my 4th-year review takes place in the 2021-2022 academic year instead, will these observation letters still be valid, or will they have to be redone?

The peer teaching observations you currently have will not need to be re-done.

72. How should the charge to promotion and tenure committees be modified in the midst of the pandemic?

Please see the Standard Charge to Promotion and Tenure Committees on the VPFA website. A portion of this document addresses additional points to be addressed in response to COVID.

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