

Faculty Handbook Revisions Clarifications in Chapter 3 Language

Unanimously Approved by the Faculty Handbook Review Committee

Summary. These changes make clarifications to Chapter 3, particularly the promotion and tenure processes, as requested by various Senate and University committees, as well as suggested by FHRC members. Several of these changes resolve apparent contradictions, align the language between various parts, and clarify rarely used processes.

3.6.4 Eligibility for Promotion and Tenure

There is no fixed requirement for years of service at a given rank before a faculty member can be promoted or tenured. However, the qualifications for tenure or for promotion to associate professor generally cannot be demonstrated fully in less than five complete years of service; promotion to professor cannot **generally** be demonstrated fully in less than four complete years on full-time appointment at the associate professor level. Only in ~~exceptional and well-~~ documented cases, in which a faculty member has met all requirements for promotion and/or tenure in a shorter time, should they be recommended for promotion and/or tenure before meeting these standard expectations for completed years in rank.

The norm for consideration of candidates for tenure and promotion to associate professor is therefore during the sixth year of appointment. A candidate must be considered for tenure during their sixth year if they have not been granted tenure earlier and have not waived consideration. Under no circumstances should the length of the probationary period exceed seven years of full-time service except where the faculty member has agreed in writing that a year in which the faculty member qualified for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or took leave without pay will not count toward the probationary period. The written agreement must be received by the provost within the probationary year in which the extension is requested.

If a faculty member begins employment between January 1 and May 15, the partial academic or calendar year shall not count as part of the probationary period.

A faculty member who feels that they have not met the requirements for tenure by the sixth year can **forever** waive consideration by stating, in writing, that they do not wish to be considered by the department. In such a case, the dean will send the letter of noncontinuation to the faculty member.

3.6.5.E. The Department's and Dean's Recommendation

The eligible department faculty who voted on a candidate's promotion and/or tenure will write a summary letter that reflects the vote and represents all aspects of the discussion leading to that vote. The department head/chair will also write an evaluative letter (that will count as his/her vote) with an explicit recommendation for or against promotion and/or tenure. In addition to these two required letters, individual faculty members may write letters explaining why they do or do not favor promotion and/or tenure. Where there are fewer than three faculty members in a department who are eligible to write letters of evaluation, the head/chair **shall appoint, with**

Commented [A1]: This aligns the language on associate → full with that of the assistant → associate level

Commented [A2]: The current language calls for "exceptional" cases that "met" requirements. Those two statements are contradictory. This language clarifies that a well-documented case in which all criteria are met would be eligible for tenure and/or promotion.

Commented [A3]: This change was requested because it contradicts other sections of the handbook. Faculty can go up in the 7th year, but this requires that they "forever" waive consideration in the 6th year, meaning that waiving in the 6th year means a candidate can't go up for tenure in the 7th year, which they otherwise have the right to do. Removing "forever" means that they can waive consideration in the 6th year and receive a noncontinuation notice, but if they go up in the 7th and are granted tenure, that nullifies the noncontinuation notice.

I'm told these cases are exceptionally rare, but they do happen.

majority approval of the department's tenured and tenure-track faculty, eligible may ask for letters from faculty members in other departments who have knowledge of the candidate's professional performance. Those faculty from outside the department will serve with the eligible faculty to accomplish the work of the faculty review and write the summary letter. If the unit has no eligible faculty, then, with majority approval of the tenure-track faculty, the head/chair will appoint eligible faculty members in other departments who have knowledge of the candidate's professional performance to serve as unit faculty to accomplish the work of the faculty review and write the summary letter. For faculty members hired under the research cluster initiative, the head/chair shall ask for a letter from the cluster leader prior to the consideration of the candidate for sharing with tenured faculty (and those of higher rank in cases of promotion). In such cases, the tenured faculty along with the head/chair will consider this information in making recommendations for promotion and tenure. Before writing the letter, the cluster leader shall seek advice from the steering committee of the cluster. Letters from the home department should address the quality of research/creative work and the candidate's potential for continued work, teaching effectiveness, effectiveness in the area of extension, service contributions, and, in tenure cases, potential to contribute as a productive and collegial member of the academic unit in all relevant areas. In the case of candidates for tenure-on-hire letters from the candidate's current colleagues as well as from Auburn faculty members are strongly encouraged and should address these same issues.

Faculty should bear in mind that letters to the Promotion and Tenure Committee are an important source of information for the committee. Letters can help the committee to make an informed judgment about the candidate's collegiality by addressing the candidate's performance of their duties within a department. Letters can also help the committee, whose members may not come from the candidate's field, understand the significance of the candidate's work and make a fair appraisal of it. Faculty, department heads/chairs, and chairs should note that, unlike letters from outside reviewers, which remain confidential, their letters will be made available to and may be rebutted by the candidate.

The department head/chair shall communicate the department's vote to the candidate in writing and also make available provide copies to the candidate of all letters submitted by the committee, the department head/chair, and individual faculty members. After reviewing the letters, the candidate has five working days to write a rebuttal if desired. The candidate can also make an informed decision about whether or not to continue with the process of seeking promotion and/or tenure. If the candidate wishes to continue the process despite a negative recommendation, the department head/chair and dean shall honor the candidate's request.

If there is a college committee, its members will review the dossier, letters, and the candidate's rebuttal (if submitted), and they will vote by secret ballot. The committee will write a summary letter that reflects the vote and represents all aspects of the discussion leading to that vote. The dean will also write an evaluative letter (that will count as his/her vote) with an explicit recommendation for or against promotion and/or tenure. The dean shall communicate, in writing, the college/school committee vote and make available provide copies to the candidate of the college's/school's and dean's letters. After reviewing the letters, the candidate has five working days to write a rebuttal if desired.

Commented [A4]: These revisions clarify what happens when there are few or no eligible voting faculty in a department, and also clarify that the appointment of outside faculty to serve as departmental voting faculty should be with the majority approval of the tenured and tenure-track faculty. Note that this only happens in case there are fewer than three eligible faculty. This language also clarifies what happens if there are zero eligible faculty.

Commented [A5]: This clarifies the question of what it means to "make available" in that it means candidates get a copy – which then allows them to write a rebuttal if they so choose.

Commented [A6]: Some logic here as the prior edit.

3.6.5.H. University-Level Review and Recommendation and Notification of the Candidate

Candidates considered for tenure and promotion on the schedule noted above shall be notified of the decision no later than the end of spring semester. Candidates for rank and tenure-on-hire shall be notified in a timely manner. A list of newly promoted and tenured faculty shall be made public by the end of summer term.

~~If tenure is denied in the fifth year, the department head/chair may give the candidate a letter of noncontinuation.~~ Should tenure not be granted during the sixth year, the head/chair shall give the candidate at least a 12 months' notice of noncontinuation. Such a candidate may be considered for tenure during the seventh year of full-time service, but this consideration does not invalidate the noncontinuation notice unless tenure is granted. In no case shall a candidate be considered for tenure by the Promotion and Tenure Committee more than two times.

Commented [A7]: This deletion resolves a conflict between this section and earlier sections. We believe this is a holdover from when the handbook had people going up for tenure in the fifth year (now it is the sixth). Given that going up in the fifth year is now going up early, it makes little sense to give someone a noncontinuation notice for going up early and not succeeding. Notice in the following sentence, if they are not successful in the sixth year, they "shall" get a noncontinuation notice.