

**Measures to Address Impacts  
of COVID-19 Pandemic on Faculty Career Progress**

Revised September 29, 2020

This document provides guidance on making temporary adjustments associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to:

- tenure timelines
- faculty evaluation, including reappointment, tenure, promotion and fixed-term reviews and annual performance evaluation, and
- sabbatical and professional development leaves.

Principles underlying these adjustments include:

- Excellence in teaching, scholarship/creative endeavor, outreach/service and the provision of lifelong learning through extension should be fostered and rewarded, and
- The COVID-19 pandemic may have had negative impacts on faculty productivity.

Tenure Timelines

Based on a variety of challenges faculty have faced as a result of the pandemic, including but not limited to extra caregiving duties and personal health concerns, in March 2020 we invited pre-tenure and pre-fixed-term faculty to request an extension to their tenure/fixed-term clock in accordance with the Office of Academic Affairs *Policy on Stopping the Tenure or Extended Term Clock*. In extenuating circumstances, such as the pandemic, a clock stop postpones, by one year, (1) the next scheduled reappointment review and (2) the latest date for the tenure or extended (fixed)-term decision.

- Requests for clock stop for tenure/fixed-term review in AY20-21 were due May 15, 2020.
- Requests for delay in the mid-probationary review or fixed term review (if unit does not require outside reviews) was August 20, 2020. In this case, the mid-probationary review will occur in AY 21-22.
- All other pre-tenure and pre-fixed-term faculty must request a clock stop no later than **May 15, 2021**. This includes individuals who prefer to keep their mid-probationary review in AY20-21 but delay their tenure/fixed-term review by one year.

Before requesting an extension related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a faculty member is strongly encouraged to speak with their unit head about the pros and cons of an extension, particularly in light of the considerations listed below.

For more information, see [http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/files/docs/clock\\_stops.pdf](http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/files/docs/clock_stops.pdf).

Even with this extension it is critically important that faculty evaluation committees, unit heads and deans approach performance reviews with flexibility and understanding. The following changes in policy and practice are intended to reflect this aim.

## **Teaching Evaluation**

In March, faculty quickly pivoted to deliver the remainder of their spring courses online. In recognition that these circumstances may have adversely affected student evaluations, we noted that faculty should be shielded from the immediate impacts of negative teaching evaluations attributable to pandemic conditions and their consequences. Faculty were given the option to include or exclude their student course evaluations from Spring 2020 in future performance evaluations (including tenure and promotion processes). If faculty chose to exclude those evaluations, they are expected to produce a document that reflects on the challenges and opportunities of the altered teaching environment. For example, they might write a narrative explaining how the move online was accomplished, how student expectations changed, and what new skills or other insights regarding pedagogy were gained as a result. This document would stand in place of the evaluations in any subsequent review where the evaluations would appear. *This includes annual performance evaluations as well as reappointment, tenure, promotion, fixed-term and post-tenure reviews.*

Course evaluations will be conducted for AY20-21 as scheduled. However, units are encouraged to customize course evaluation templates to capture the unique context of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Units are further encouraged to evaluate student feedback of teaching for formative rather than summative purposes.

Regardless of the situation, however, student evaluations should **never** be used as the sole basis for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. Peer and unit head evaluations of instructional performance are important. Faculty should be given opportunities to demonstrate their excellence in teaching in a variety of other ways as well. Given the significant change to instructional delivery during the pandemic, units are encouraged to consider teaching narratives and/or evidence that shows how and what faculty learned while teaching during the shift to online instructional delivery; any training undertaken related to WyoCourses, Zoom, and other on-line instructional design and tools; resources they used to shift to online instruction, and innovative efforts toward mentoring of and support for undergraduate and graduate students facing uncertain and rapidly changing circumstances.

Supporting documentation to demonstrate effective teaching may also include evidence drawn from the assessment of student learning outcomes specified in the course syllabus; analyses of course content, including alignment with accreditation student outcomes; evaluation of teaching “products,” such multi-media materials like YouTube instructional videos, PowerPoint or Prezi

presentations, podcasts, blogs, webinars, and interactive content; the development or use of instructional technology and computer assisted instruction (e.g., drill and practice, tutorials and simulations); as well as other evidence determined by the academic unit to be appropriate.

For more resources, please visit the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (<http://www.uwyo.edu/ctl/>). The ECTL is offering another two rounds of their course on Digital Teaching and Learning. The October 26-November 20 session is still open for application until Wednesday October 21, 2020.

### **Research/Scholarship/Creative Activity**

Promoting and strengthening the university as a scholarly and creative enterprise continues to be an important strategic priority. Faculty members should be supported and encouraged to continue their research programs, scholarship, and creative endeavors during this period. At the same time, it is important to recognize that productivity may be disrupted or adversely affected as a product of the pandemic. Additional circumstances surrounding health concerns that require special accommodations and caregiving responsibilities may further limit faculty career progress.

In recognition of the possible cascading effects, faculty review committees, unit heads and deans are asked to exercise flexibility in evaluating faculty scholarship. Deans should work with academic unit heads to determine an appropriate time horizon for modifying research/creative activity expectations, depending on the extent and type of disruption experienced and documented by each faculty member. *Units are encouraged to pay particular attention to those faculty whose scholarly productivity has been disproportionately affected. For example, female researchers with young children report a 17% larger decline in available time to devote to their scholarship during the pandemic. This impact is further exacerbated when there are multiple dependents in the family. (See [https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y?fbclid=IwAR01DwrDBRX4gwMFm7XsKD\\_sRIIpI4tkTmgdgg3J3QJG8KjxDigytN\\_ml68](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y?fbclid=IwAR01DwrDBRX4gwMFm7XsKD_sRIIpI4tkTmgdgg3J3QJG8KjxDigytN_ml68) for study by Myers et al., 2020).* These considerations and revised expectations should serve as the basis for making judgements not only about progress toward tenure, fixed term, promotion, and post-tenure productivity, but also for annual performance evaluation.

Faculty members are responsible for providing a narrative explaining any impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their research/scholarship/creative activity (e.g., delays in completing projects, delays in journal reviews and publication of submitted articles, lab closings and restriction on travel/field research, conference cancellations, etc.).

Academic units may consider revisiting their research/scholarship/creative expectations and criteria for AY 2020-21 reviews. It is also important to be cognizant of longer term impacts that are a product of the pandemic. One way of doing this is to give greater weight to the quality and impact of published research versus the quantity of research produced. Another approach is to assign greater value to a paper that was accepted but not delivered at a conference because of cancellations and/or travel restrictions. This may be particularly important in cases where the publication of conference proceedings is a primary indicator of research productivity. Virtual presentations and performances could be evaluated as equivalent to in-person events.

### **Service/Outreach/Extension**

Pandemic related impacts on internal and external service, outreach and extension activities will likely vary among faculty members. Some faculty, due to expertise needed to support the university's response to COVID-19, may have experienced a significant increase workload associated with service since March 2020, including but not limited to providing leadership in critical areas, participating in working groups that provided recommendations for the fall return plan and for the implementation of that plan, assisting with student experiences and support, etc. Other faculty may have experienced a decline in service due to the pandemic – perhaps due to increased effort in preparing to flip their classes and/or a reduction in committee work. In-person extension activities may have been curtailed due to pandemic related travel restrictions or county/state public health orders. Faculty are encouraged to provide in their evaluation portfolios a detailed narrative of the ways their service, outreach and extension obligations were impacted by COVID-19. In evaluating service, outreach and extension, units are encouraged to give weight to the quality, innovation and impact of the work.

### **Job Descriptions/Redistribution of Effort**

In response to pandemic impacts, Unit heads are encouraged to review faculty job descriptions and make adjustments to workload distributions where appropriate.

This redistribution of effort may be needed to reflect the increased amount of time faculty have devoted to teaching and mentoring students as a result of the changed learning, research and performance environments. Normally, increasing the percentage of effort allocated to teaching is based on giving a faculty member an extra course or an additional credit hour for teaching a large class. Given the demands placed on faculty during the pandemic, a change in teaching load could also be done in recognition of the extra effort required to design and deliver a high-quality online or hybrid courses. A criterion for adjusting teaching load may include participation in professional development opportunities related to online instruction.

In addition, a modification to workload distributions may be needed to reflect changes in service loads as a result of the pandemic (e.g., leadership/participation in COVID-19 efforts, reduction of service obligations). This type of redistribution would result in a modification to workload in other areas of the job description so that the total workload equals 100% of effort (e.g., increase in service and decrease in teaching load or research load).

Finally, restrictions on research labs, conducting field research and travel, as well as limited availability to libraries, archives, county extension offices, performance venues and other critical facilities, could have a negative impact on scholarship. In cases where these obstacles require substantial recalibration of activity, a course reduction may be appropriate.

Prior to adjusting job descriptions, deans should work with unit heads to establish criteria for the temporary redistribution of effort. These criteria must be approved by the Office of Academic Affairs before job descriptions are revised. Please send proposed criteria to Aneesa McDonald

([aneesamc@uwyo.edu](mailto:aneesamc@uwyo.edu)). Any revised job descriptions must be uploaded by the Dean's or Director's Office directly into the faculty member's WyoVita file.

In order to strategically manage the unit and ensure that instructional needs are met, this temporary adjustment to workload distributions/job descriptions may be distributed over a two-year cycle (AY20-21 & AY21-22). Adjustments beyond that time frame must be approved by the Dean and Academic Affairs.

All faculty evaluation, including annual performance, mid-probationary, tenure, fixed-term, promotion and post-tenure, should be aligned with job descriptions and distribution of effort. It is incumbent on the faculty member and unit head to document and describe any productivity disruptions experienced in enough detail to allow future reviewers to make informed and appropriate judgments.

### **Sabbatical and Professional Development Leave**

Faculty with approved sabbatical and professional development leaves planned for the 2020-21 academic year, including semester-long leaves, were given the opportunity to request a deferral, if the pandemic and related travel restrictions directly caused problems for the proposed work. If a sabbatical or professional development leave was taken and subsequently impacted by the pandemic, faculty should describe the impacts in their final report, which is due within four weeks of the semester they return from the leave.

Sabbatical and professional development leaves are privileges offered to faculty to enhance their scholarly and teaching competence and capabilities. Given budgetary constraints and impacts of the pandemic, sabbatical and professional development leave proposals for 2021-22 should be limited to *year-long projects* that require the faculty member to conduct work off-campus. Unit heads and deans are encouraged to explore alternative opportunities to support faculty who have semester-long projects that can be conducted on campus and establish internal processes for approving and managing these opportunities. For example, adjustments could be made to teaching loads and/or course schedules (e.g., heavier loads in one semester and/or assign summer offerings taught onload).