

Annual Review of Faculty Performance: Frequently Asked Questions and Some Guidelines

What is the purpose of the “review of tenured faculty?”

There are several beneficial aspects of using a formal review of tenured faculty members. First, asking the faculty members in a department to discuss what they believe are minimum standards for performance helps clarify what faculty believe is acceptable performance. During this discussion faculty members can discuss the various aspects of their work and agree upon a common set of criteria. Currently, minimum performance standards for tenured faculty are somewhat ambiguous. Second, this plan articulates a review process that seeks the input and judgment of professional colleagues and does not rely on the opinion of one person; e.g., the department chair. Third, this annual review was designed to include a development process that can assist faculty members who are having performance issues.

Finally, the end goal is that this process will result in improved performance for all faculty members. All faculty members in the unit should clearly know what the standards are and be evaluated against those standards as part of their annual review process. Important components of the process would include 1) clearly notifying all faculty about the process and the departmental approved standards; 2) evenhanded application of process for ALL tenured faculty; and 3) the maintenance of written records documenting the results of both the annual reviews and the five year cumulative reviews for all faculty members.

What is required for the “annual review of faculty performance” for tenured faculty members?

The first step is that the tenured faculty of each department or unit must develop and publish minimum standards for overall satisfactory performance. Normally these standards are discussed in the department and approved by the tenured faculty to serve as the guide for minimum standards for performance for tenured faculty. While these standards should not be overly prescriptive they should also be specific enough to provide guidance for the department chair and the department committee charged with reviewing faculty members (e.g., promotion and tenure or personnel committee).

Does this apply to untenured or nonregular faculty members?

The performance of all non-regular and tenure track faculty members should be reviewed annually by the appropriate unit supervisor (e.g., department chair, dean, director, etc.) The review should cover the performance for the past year

and plans for the coming year. Written evaluations must be provided to non-regular faculty members where there are concerns about substantial shortcomings in performance.

How can the “annual review of faculty performance” affect tenured faculty members?

Tenured faculty members have proven their ability to contribute significantly in their discipline and to work independently and productively in their field. By fostering creativity and protecting academic freedom, tenure safeguards faculty from unfair dismissal based on arbitrary or discriminatory practices, thus encouraging the constant search for truth that is the hallmark of the University.

Under the University’s policy for the review of tenured faculty (or any other university policy), academic tenure should be revoked only with just cause, and may only be done in accordance with the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri. However, tenure does not protect faculty from the consequences of not performing satisfactorily their duties to the University. It is in the best interest of the faculty as a whole to ensure that each faculty member contributes fully to the institution throughout that individual's career

When does this process of reviewing of tenured faculty members with the new minimum standards start?

Section 310.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations relates to the “procedures for review of tenured faculty” and was passed by the Board of Curators in January of 2001. To be implemented, the department must first identify and approve the new minimum standards. Once they are formally articulated, this new type of review begins with the next review cycle of annual performance reviews with individual faculty members. All faculty members must be reviewed with these same standards.

What is required annually?

Each year every tenured faculty member, including those with part-time administrative positions, will submit a signed annual report describing her/his activities in research, teaching and service. The annual report will be reviewed by the chair or evaluation committee of the unit following normal unit practices. Using the standards that have been agreed upon by the department faculty, the work of the faculty member will be rated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory in research, teaching and service, and an overall evaluation of satisfactory or unsatisfactory should also be provided. The faculty member will receive this information in a written evaluation. If the annual evaluation is satisfactory no other specific action related to the annual review is needed.

What happens if a tenured faculty member gets an “unsatisfactory” annual review?

If the overall evaluation of the tenured faculty member is unsatisfactory, there must be a face-to-face discussion of the evaluation between the faculty member and the chair. The faculty member will sign the written evaluation to acknowledge its receipt and may provide a written response to the evaluation. A copy of this signed evaluation will be provided to the faculty member by the chair within a month after the faculty member has signed the evaluation.

What happens next ... after the annual reviews?

At five-year intervals a tenured faculty member will resubmit the annual reports and evaluation statements for the past five years, with a concise summary statement of research, teaching, and service activities for the five-year period, and a current curriculum vitae to the chair or evaluation committee of the unit.

The first five-year review will be done five years after the tenure decision or the last formal review of the faculty member for promotion to associate professor/full professor. Faculty hired with tenure will be reviewed five years after they are hired. Based on this five-year report, the chair will evaluate the faculty member's performance as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The five-year evaluation process will be complete with a satisfactory evaluation.

Departments likely identified their minimum standards at different times during the past several years. When do the formal “five year” reviews start?

The five year post-tenure review process would begin five years after the department formally articulated the new post-tenure review standards. It is also likely those standards will change during any five-year period. As the annual post-tenure assessment takes place, a chair would evaluate faculty members against the standard in place during the period of each annual review, recognizing it could change. The five year review is based on the annual reviews.

What happens if the five year summary evaluation is “unsatisfactory”?

If the five year summary evaluation is unsatisfactory, then the five-year report will be sent to the appropriate established committee of the department/unit, typically the one that reviews faculty for tenure and promotion. The departmental committee of faculty peers will perform its own full review of the performance of the faculty member over the five-year period and provide an independent assessment of the performance of the faculty member. If the departmental committee judges the performance of the faculty member to be satisfactory then the five-year evaluation process will be considered complete.

If both the chair and the departmental committee determine that the performance of a faculty member is unsatisfactory for the five-year period, the report will be forwarded to the dean responsible for the unit. The dean will review the report and provide an assessment of the performance of the faculty member. If the dean judges the performance of the faculty member to be satisfactory then the five-year evaluation process will be considered complete.

At every level of review, the faculty member should receive a copy of any written report that is part of these proceedings and can appeal any of the evaluations, decisions, or recommendations to the next level in the process.

What happens if the committee and the dean find that the tenured faculty member's work is unsatisfactory?

If a two-thirds majority of the members of the department committee and the dean consider the performance of the faculty member unsatisfactory, a plan for professional development must be written. This plan will be developed by the faculty member, the department committee, a mutually agreed upon mediator from outside the department, and the chair of the department.

The development plan should have clear and attainable objectives for the faculty member and may include a reallocation of the faculty member's effort and a commitment of institutional resources so the plan can be achieved. This plan should be signed by all parties involved in its design. The development phase begins when the necessary resources as described in the development plan are provided.

Once in place, how is the developmental plan evaluated?

The faculty member with a plan for professional development will submit an annual progress report to the chair for three successive years after the plan has been initiated. The chair will review the report and provide a written annual evaluation on the progress of the faculty member toward the objectives stated in the plan. If the chair finds satisfactory progress for any two of the three years, then the process will cease and the faculty member will begin a new five-year review cycle.

If the chair does not find satisfactory progress in two of the three years of the development plan, the chair will provide the annual reports and evaluations to the department committee and the mediator. If they determine there is satisfactory progress in two of the three years of the plan, then the process ceases and the faculty member will begin a new five-year review cycle.

If both the chair and the department committee do not find satisfactory progress in two of the three years of the development plan, the chair will provide the annual reports and evaluations to the dean. If the dean finds satisfactory progress in two of the three years of the development plan, the process ceases and the faculty member will begin a new five-year review cycle.

What happens if the committee and the dean still find that the faculty member has not made satisfactory progress during the five year plan?

If the committee and the dean agree that the faculty member has not made satisfactory progress, then the materials are sent to the campus committee on Tenure and Promotion and to the Provost or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. They will in turn review the reports and will recommend separately to the Chancellor that he/she take one of two actions:

1) an additional two-year development plan be written and implemented in consultation with the faculty member and the originating departmental committee, 2) the faculty member be considered for dismissal of cause proceedings. If these proceedings are initiated it will be done in accordance with the procedures for dismissal for cause described in section 310.060.

This procedure for review and development of faculty performance does not substitute for the dismissal for cause procedures stated in section 310.060. Furthermore, this process for evaluating tenured faculty does not impose additional requirements upon the University prior to initiating dismissal for cause procedures as stated in the Collected Rules and Regulations.

Many people think the process for reviewing tenured faculty members is too cumbersome and that you should not have to wait five years to determine that a faculty member is not meeting the performance standards of the department. Is there something else you can do?

While the formal post-tenure review five-year clock does not begin until the new standards are identified, there is no reason a chair could not consult a faculty body and get input for the evaluation of the faculty members in their annual reviews. This is commonplace in units throughout the University of Missouri and while it would not be the formal post-tenure review, that type of input could be very informative and helpful to faculty members. A faculty member may nonetheless be dismissed for cause if the facts and circumstances satisfy the standard of adequate cause for dismissal as outlined in Section 310.020C.1 of the Collected Rules and Regulations.

What if my department has not formally adopted a set of minimum standards for faculty performance?

All departments should have adopted a set of minimum standards for faculty performance. However, in cases where department standards have not been adopted, chairs are still required to conduct annual evaluations with faculty members, make recommendations for salary adjustments, and faculty members can still be dismissed for cause.