

**TO:** Members of the Council of Deans

**FROM:** Ann E. Cudd, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor *Ann E. Cudd*

**DATE:** April 29, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Revised Guidelines for the Annual Review of Faculty – Updated

The success of the University of Pittsburgh depends in large part on the success of its faculty in performing their collective responsibilities of teaching, research, and service. To be successful, faculty must receive regular feedback that helps them to shape and grow their careers by understanding and discussing strengths, weaknesses and areas of professional excellence or concern. Given the impact a faculty member's work and conduct have on the broader community, including our students, we all have an interest in ensuring that annual reviews of faculty are informative, accurate, and constructive, and that the process of reviewing faculty is fair and transparent. Accordingly, the evaluation of faculty is one of the most important responsibilities of chairs, deans, and campus presidents. (On a closely related note, today I am also sending all deans and regional campus presidents a separate memo on the assessment of teaching.)

We continue the collaborative approach to improving the written evaluation of faculty members throughout the University that was taken by previous provosts working with the University Senate, deans, and campus presidents. Following that approach, guidelines were developed for annual reviews of faculty (addressed in a [1999 memo from then-Provost Maher](#)) and to limit and define the conditions under which a dean or campus president may reduce the base contract salary of a tenured faculty member (discussed in a [2018 memo from then-Provost Beeson](#)). In addition, every year the deans and campus presidents have been asked to affirm to the Office of the Provost that annual reviews of faculty have been completed and are on file. A random sample of the review letters from Provost-area schools and regional campuses is then analyzed and feedback about them is provided.

These efforts have strengthened annual reviews, but they can be further improved.

To that end, I asked the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee to lead a process to review and revise the 1999 guidelines in collaboration with the Senate Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee. The resulting revised guidelines are set forth below. They were approved by the Faculty Affairs Committee on May 5, 2020, and the Faculty Assembly on June 9, 2020, and were endorsed by the Council of Deans on September 3, 2020.

The revised guidelines will improve faculty annual reviews in three significant ways. First, they will increase the transparency of the process through the annual notification to faculty of the

timing, procedures, and information they should expect to provide and receive in their formal annual review. Second, they ensure that faculty will receive guidance and resources to help them address any identified needs for improvement. Third, they ensure regular conversation regarding each faculty member's professional development and progress toward promotion or tenure. These benefits should accrue to all faculty, whether appointment stream, tenure stream, or tenured.

I emphasize that, like the 1999 guidelines, these are guidelines for the evaluator and cannot always be applied rigidly. In addition, and as our experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, changes in circumstances can alter the needs of, and challenges facing, both the institution and individual faculty. Consequently, a faculty member's goals, duties, or expectations might require adjustment in response. The principles animating these revised guidelines nevertheless should continue to apply in such situations, and any adjustments should be communicated clearly and in writing.

The unprecedented challenges of 2020 and 2021 have disrupted many of our lives in profound and fundamental ways. In recognition of this reality, I invite each faculty member, if they so choose, to document their challenges and to submit them with their annual review materials for this year and in future years, if relevant. If provided, any such information should be taken into account in each faculty member's reviews for the years that are affected. This same documentation may be included and considered with faculty members' materials in their upcoming promotion and tenure reviews.\*

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### **Revised Guidelines for the Annual Review of Faculty**

Developed by the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee in conjunction with the Senate Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee and the Office of the Provost

1. All faculty should be notified annually about the annual review process, including timing, procedures, and information they should expect to provide and receive in their formal annual evaluation.
2. Evaluations must include an overall assessment of performance, as well as more detailed assessment of specific performance areas.
  - a. For tenure-stream and tenured faculty, performance in teaching, research, scholarship, and service should be addressed; the weighting of these areas may vary by unit and individual faculty role, and this weighting should be specified in the evaluation.
  - b. For appointment-stream faculty, performance in specific relevant areas should be addressed. These areas may include teaching, research, scholarship, and service, as well as other job functions as outlined in the faculty member's appointment contract or letter of appointment. Faculty might not have formally defined responsibilities in each area, and the weighting of the relevant performance areas should be specified in the evaluation.
3. Evaluations need to identify achievements and accomplishments of the faculty member.

4. If there are areas of performance that are judged to be deficient or in need of improvement, they should be explicitly identified, and specific guidance should be provided about how these problems can be remedied. Guidance may include departmental, unit, university, and external resources, along with a recommended timeline for demonstrable improvement.
5. Faculty should state future goals in their self-evaluations. Annual evaluations should note these goals and address whether they are appropriate for departmental or unit goals, and whether they are appropriate for promotion. This feedback is especially important for untenured and appointment-stream faculty.
6. Where relevant, progress toward promotion and/or tenure should be noted in evaluations. Recommendations regarding accomplishments, inadequacies, and areas for improvement that may affect promotion/tenure should be clearly communicated. Resources to assist faculty promotion/tenure should also be provided as needed.
7. Evaluations should include any changes in job duties or expectations for the coming year.
8. Evaluations should invite the faculty member to meet with the letter writer (or appropriate supervisor or administrator) to discuss the contents of the evaluation. Individual meetings are especially important for junior and early-career faculty in the tenure and appointment streams, and when problems need to be addressed. The timing of this meeting will vary across units but should occur within a reasonable timeframe after the faculty member submits their annual evaluation material.

\*In recognition of the broad range of challenges faculty have faced in 2020 and 2021 and in consultation with the Council of Deans, I have expanded the scope of the information that faculty are invited to provide for consideration with their annual review and tenure and promotion materials to include documentation of challenges beyond those directly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.