




MEMORANDUM

Date: December 7, 2020

To: Georgia Tech Faculty

From: Steven W. McLaughlin
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs 

Subject: Updated Adjustments to Faculty Tenure and Similar Events Due to the Impact of Covid-19

When the pandemic hit the U.S. in early 2020, the personal and professional lives of every member of the Georgia Tech community were impacted. Georgia Tech faculty and staff had to adapt to new norms that fundamentally altered teaching and research. Many opportunities for collaboration, travel, and publishing were either postponed or canceled. Even still, our faculty and staff stepped up and continued critical research and remained dedicated to providing our students with an outstanding educational experience.

We want to support our faculty in every possible way during this time. The pandemic has had a continuing effect on performance measures and outcomes that are typically documented and discussed during annual review, critical review, tenure, promotion, and Periodic Peer Review. On April 20, 2020, this office released a memo explaining that we would adjust the time frame for many such events, including tenure.

At the time of the memo's release, we didn't yet know that the pandemic and its impact would continue well into this academic year, so we will extend many of those original adjustments. The language below outlines our original adjustments from the April 20 memo, with new updates highlighted in bold. As you can see, there are a large number of updates.

These changes and adjustments are the result of conversations with many faculty, especially from recommendations by a working group that included the vice provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development, the associate deans for Faculty Development, and the Office of Faculty Affairs, with input from the Faculty Status and Grievance Committee, the ADVANCE Professors, and the Faculty Executive Board.

Faculty can address the impact of Covid-19 on their professional activities in their evaluation packages for annual review, critical review, tenure, promotion, and Periodic Peer Review. I am asking that members of review committees and administrators take into careful consideration the circumstances of any disruption in a respective candidate's performance.

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Faculty may document these disruptions in any or all of the following ways:

- 1. Their five-page narrative (such as adding a section titled, “Covid-19 impacts on professional activities”);**
- 2. Their CV (i.e., marking canceled seminars or conference talks, loss in funded awards, graduate students who discontinued their studies, etc., with a notation, “Canceled due to Covid-19” or “Returned to home country due to Covid-19”);**
- 3. Their teaching portfolio (for lecturers); and/or**
- 4. An addendum (limited to two pages in standard formatting). The addendum should be uploaded into PROMOTE in the background section and would be viewable to internal reviewers only.**

An FAQ is being released with this memo to help answer questions and provide further details.

Tenure and Critical Review Decisions:

After consultation with chairs, deans, and the provost, the president will add a one-year automatic extension to the probationary period for each **individual untenured tenure-track faculty member hired between October 16, 2014, and October 15, 2020 (that is, faculty currently serving their first through sixth year of service as of the 2020-2021 academic year).**

Additionally, tenure-track faculty members who were hired between October 16, 2013, and October 15, 2014 and who have already been awarded one extension will automatically be granted an additional one-year extension. Individual faculty members can choose whether to use that extension, which means that the extension will not change the first year that they can go up for tenure, but will only extend the last year that they must go up. Tenure policies and procedures will be applied to individuals who receive this extension in a manner consistent with extensions granted for other reasons. We have addressed several special cases below.

Clarification on Special Cases:

- **Faculty members hired between October 16, 2019, and October 15, 2020, will receive the extension. This new adjustment is to address the continuing effects of the pandemic.**
- Faculty members who have not yet gone through the Third Year Critical Review will have the option to go up in their third year (if they do not use the tenure extension) or the following year (if they do use the tenure extension). The faculty member’s choice of whether to use the extension when they go up for tenure is independent of the choice that they make for Critical Review.
 - Under normal conditions, faculty members who received a decision of “Reappointment with Warning” during the AY2019-2020 review cycle would need to go through a Critical Review the following year. The automatic extension

means that these faculty members may delay that review until the AY2021-2022 review cycle.

- Faculty members who go up for tenure and are denied may still be able to use the extension depending on their circumstances. The extension granted is to the timeline, the date by which they must go up for tenure and when a faculty member receives a terminal year contract. Faculty in these situations are encouraged to seek advice from their school chair or college. Faculty members who were denied tenure and are on a terminal year contract for AY2019-2020 or AY2020-2021 do not receive an extension.
- Faculty members who received an approved extension for circumstances other than Covid-19 during AY2019-2020 will not receive a second extension for this period.
- **Faculty members who have already received two extensions to the probationary period for years prior AY2019-2020 may request an additional extension. Specifically, the University System of Georgia will only allow two extensions to the probationary period, but we have received permission to allow exceptions for people experiencing challenges because of Covid-19. If you wish to pursue this exception, please submit a request that indicates the specifics of how the pandemic impacted your work. Similar to standard requests to extend the probationary period toward tenure or critical review, the request needs to be routed through GT-TRACS.**

The applicable policy can be viewed at <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/faculty-handbook/3.3.5-tenure>.

Lecturers' Third Year Critical Review:

Add an automatic one-year extension to the period for all lecturers hired prior to **October 16, 2020**, who have not gone through their Third-Year Critical Review. Lecturers would have a choice of going up for their third-year review in their third year (if they chose not to use the review time extension) or the following year (if they do use the review extension).

The lecturer third-year review process is determined and coordinated by the schools or appropriate home unit, which will work with lecturers to determine individual preferences for using the extension or not. If a lecturer does or does not accept the extension, the school or appropriate home unit will notify Faculty Affairs when submitting the review documentation to Faculty Affairs so that it is noted in their file.

Policy: <http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/faculty-handbook/3.2.2-non-tenure-track-academic-faculty-members-hiring-and-promotion-guidelines>

Librarians/Archivists:

Following a discussion with Library leadership, we determined that no automatic extension to the timeline for current faculty members in the librarian I or archivist I roles or for the third-year

cumulative review for faculty members in all ranks is needed. However, if a faculty member (in any rank) determines that they need an extension due to Covid-19 circumstances, they should make a request in writing to their supervisor no later than **May 2022**. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis and requires approval by the supervisor, dean, and Faculty Affairs in GT-TRACS as an “Other” package.

Policy: <http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/faculty-handbook/3.2.2-non-tenure-track-academic-faculty-members-hiring-and-promotion-guidelines>

Promotion: There are no automatic changes to the timelines for any faculty promotion process since there is no designated last time that a faculty member must go up for promotion, with the exception of librarian I and archivist I. This decision applies to all tenure-track faculty, librarians and archivists other than the first rank, academic professionals, lecturers, and research faculty. For all promotion and review cases, faculty may choose to address the impact of Covid-19 in their promotion package as described above.

Periodic Peer Review (PPR):

The standard PPR process allows for exceptions to be considered on a case-by-case basis. **Faculty may submit requests for exceptions that describe extenuating circumstances, such as health or personal matters, that have impacted their productivity.**

Policy: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/faculty-handbook/3.3.9-periodic-peer-review-policy>

Conclusion:

In making these adjustments to faculty events, our goal has been to offer support, encouragement, and consideration to Georgia Tech faculty and staff during an incredibly tough time. In this memo, we have made every effort to consider all types of faculty and their individual situations. However, we recognize that there may be faculty and circumstances that we have not considered or that these guidelines do not address. Other extensions or requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be approved and documented in GT-TRACs, as appropriate.

If you would like to request an extension or other consideration due to the impact of Covid-19, please discuss your situation with your school chair or supervisor. If our office can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns. We are here to support you.