

FAQ's for the Policy on Annual Performance Reviews of Tenured Faculty

1. Why do we need this policy?

In this age of accountability, many universities have put into place policies for the regular review of tenured faculty members. We have a policy on the Periodic Evaluation of Tenured Faculty, but in many departments and colleges it has fallen into disuse (if it was ever implemented). There are two reasons for this: (1) it is costly in terms of faculty time and effort, requiring the preparation of a report by the reviewee and a specially-convened departmental review committee, a burden on small units who have few people to serve on committees and a burden on large units who may have six or seven people to review each year; and (2) the results of the evaluation carry no significant consequences other than a discussion between the reviewee and the unit head, with a provision for drafting a development plan. The proposed policy on Annual Performance Reviews is intended to be easier and more efficient, both for the unit and the reviewee. It seeks to make use of documents and review mechanisms that are already in operation (or should be), as provided in VII-4.00(A) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND POLICY ON MERIT PAY DISTRIBUTION. The Salary Committee, as outlined in the Merit Pay Distribution policy, may also serve as the Annual Review Committee and review faculty members' annual performance at the same time it is reviewing them for merit increases, thereby accomplishing two objectives through one review process. Or, if the department chooses, it may establish a separate Annual Review Committee.

2. Who sets the expectations for faculty performance?

Each academic unit must set its own standards and expectations. No university policy can set the expectations for all units, as they vary greatly. In most cases, faculty members already know what is expected of them in terms of scholarship, teaching, and service, and are performing well. The setting of expectations is not meant to add to the "bean-counting" mentality (expectations should not specify how many hours are to be spent on service or how many pages of research should be published), but it does provide a way to ensure that all faculty members know what is expected of them in the three areas under review and to encourage continued productivity. It is up to the unit to decide how formally or informally the expectations should be conveyed.

3. Why may expectations not be uniform, even within the unit?

Expectations should fit the situation and talents of the faculty member. In most cases, expectations will likely be the same or similar for all, but there are exceptions. For example, a person serving as Director of Graduate Studies or in other administrative positions may have reduced expectations in the area of scholarship and teaching; a person on sabbatical may have enhanced expectations in scholarship and reduced expectations in teaching; a person nearing the

end of a major grant may be accorded time from other activities to write a new grant proposal; a person who has just completed a major research project would be given an appropriate interval before being expected to produce new research; a person who has recently taught a large and demanding course may be assigned smaller classes or fewer courses; an illness or difficult family situation should be considered when setting the annual expectation of the person so affected. (Many of these “expectations” are already well-known in the units.) In setting annual expectations, the unit should take account of its own needs and responsibilities, and the needs and skills of its faculty members. The aim is a productive faculty with each member pulling his/her own weight in the best way possible. Expectations should be equitable but not identical.

4. Does the faculty member have any say in the setting of expectations?

In most cases the setting of expectations will not be controversial, but if a faculty member feels that the expectations for him or her are unrealistic or unfair, or that there are extenuating circumstances of which the unit head is unaware, the faculty member should speak with the unit head and together they should arrive at an agreed-upon set of expectations for the coming year.

5. What happens in the case of faculty with joint appointments?

As in the case of tenure and promotion, the secondary unit should be encouraged to supply information about expectations and about how well those expectations have been met. Ultimately, the tenure home is responsible for the Annual Performance Review.

6. What does “substantially below expectations” mean?

This is not a quantifiable term but it does indicate that performance is obviously deficient, to a degree that is considered unacceptable if it were to continue. This does not pertain to an “off year” or to, say, below-average teaching evaluations (since there are, by definition, always people below average; although some attempts should be made to improve teaching).

7. Does the faculty member have any say in the development plan?

The development plan is the responsibility of the unit head, who may consult with the Annual Review Committee. The unit head should be encouraged to involve the faculty member in drafting it.

8. Does a faculty member have any recourse against proposed actions after a second negative Annual Performance Review, especially salary reduction?

All policy decisions and actions resulting from them, including this one, are grievable. See the Policies and Procedures Governing Faculty Grievances.

9. Is this policy a threat to the tenure system?

No, if anything it offers a protection to the tenure system by ensuring and documenting that tenured faculty perform their duties at or beyond the level expected of them. This will show that very few of us are “dead wood.” Nor is it meant as a threat of suspension, for which there is a separate policy that covers different issues.

10. Why is the policy not more specific in a number of instances?

The policy is intended to provide general principles and guidelines, not to be a manual of implementation procedures for every situation that may arise. It leaves room for our diverse units to implement the policy in ways compatible with their cultures and accepted modes of operation. This is the nature of policies.