

To: Deans, Associate Deans, and Department Heads

From: Linda C. Martin, Interim Senior Vice Chancellor & Senior Vice President, UTIA

CC: David White, UTIA Senior Administrative Fellow

Date: April 11, 2022

Subject: Additional COVID-19 Pandemic Extensions for Tenure-Seeking Faculty

In March 2020, the Board of Trustees authorized the granting of extensions to tenure-seeking faculty to their probationary periods in connection with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. On February 25th, 2022, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution that opens a new window for tenure-seeking faculty to requests extensions:

“Subject to the provisions set forth herein, each campus Chancellor (or the Chancellor’s designee) is hereby granted the authority and discretion to approve an extension for any faculty member who requests such an extension by no later than December 31, 2022, without requiring each faculty member to make an individualized showing of how the coronavirus crisis has impeded the faculty member’s opportunity to conduct research or other required scholarly activity.”

Extension requests are available in the following situations:

1. Faculty members who chose one-year rather than two-year extensions during 2020 will have an opportunity to seek an additional year of extension to their probationary period, for a total of a two-year extension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Faculty members who opted out of any extension during 2020 will have an opportunity to seek a one- or, at the discretion of their Chancellor (or the Chancellor’s designee), two-year extension of their probationary period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Faculty members who were not employed at the University during 2020 will have an opportunity to seek a one- or, at the discretion of their Chancellor (or the Chancellor’s designee), two-year extension of their probationary period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faculty who are currently being reviewed for tenure in AY 2021-2022 are eligible for an extension if they have not already received two years of extension because of COVID. If you have any faculty in this situation who would like an extension, please reach-out to me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to proceed. Faculty in this situation will have until April 15th, 2022 to make this decision and will need to withdraw their current tenure case from this year's cycle.

Faculty members who wish to extend their probationary periods because of the COVID pandemic should take the following steps:

1. Discuss options with department head and/or dean and learn if there are any additional deadlines and protocols that need to be followed.
2. Complete the form found at this link: tiny.utk.edu/UTIAExtensionRequest
3. The UTIA Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor / Senior Vice President will load submissions and route to the appropriate department head and dean for approval. These forms will be processed on a rolling-basis through December 31, 2022. *Faculty who are currently being considered for tenure and wish to request an extension must do so by April 15, 2022.*
4. Once approvals have been granted, the UTIA Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor / Senior Vice President will send an approval memo to the faculty member. The appropriate department head and dean (s) will receive a copy of this approval memo once it is signed by the faculty member requesting the extension.

Faculty members who have not previously been granted an extension because of COVID and who wish to receive a **one-year extension** will only need to request an extension. Faculty members who have previously received a one-year extension because of COVID and now want to request an additional year, or those wishing to request **two years** will need to provide a rationale for needing two years of extension. The request form notes this difference.

Tenure-track faculty members will not be required to accept an extension to their probationary period. It is voluntary.

Helpful Information

What is the difference between an extension and suspension?

Board policy and our Faculty Handbook allow for suspensions and extensions of the probationary period. The difference between the two is material in this instance.

- **Suspension:** Under this option, the “tenure clock” is stopped for the time of the suspension, and no extra time is added to the probationary period. Typically, on our campus, suspensions are granted under our Faculty Family Care Policy.
- **Extensions:** Under this option, the “tenure clock” continues to run and one or more years are added on to the probationary period. Board Policy limits extensions to two years for COVID-pandemic related reasons, and two years for other reasons specified in the Faculty Handbook (Section 3.11.4.2) (e.g., extensions are granted for failure to complete lab renovations in a timely fashion). Extensions for COVID-pandemic related reasons can only be requested during designed time periods (currently until December 31, 2022), while those granted for other reasons can be requested at any time.

Does this provision apply to those who are currently being reviewed for tenure?

Yes, faculty members who are currently undergoing review in AY 2021-22 are eligible for extensions. Please contact David White if you have faculty in this situation who wish to request an extension. Faculty in this situation will have until April 15th, 2022 to make this decision and will need to withdraw their current tenure case from this year's cycle.

Does this provision apply to those who are scheduled to stand for tenure in 2022-23 academic year?

Yes, faculty members scheduled for tenure review in 2022-23 are eligible for an extension.

Can a college require faculty members to declare whether or not they intend to choose an extension before December 31, 2022?

Yes, but only for those faculty members who are currently being considered for tenure and those scheduled to stand for tenure in 2022-23. This is to allow time to procure external letters and ensure sufficient time for substantive tenure review during the next academic year. Each college may set its own deadline.

If faculty members opt for extensions and later choose to apply for tenure as originally scheduled and not to wait until the extended deadline, will it be considered an early application?

No. An extension adds a year to the probationary period. Board policy requires faculty to have been on the tenure track for six years prior to the granting of tenure, so as long as faculty members meet this six-year requirement, their applications will not be considered early.

If a faculty member who has taken an extension applies for tenure before the end of the extended probationary period and is unsuccessful, can they apply in a subsequent year?

Yes. The faculty member may apply one additional time because one or more years of the probationary period will remain.

One of my faculty members has had two one-year suspensions to the tenure clock. Are they eligible for an extension under this resolution?

Yes. Because of the difference between suspensions and extensions, up to two years of extensions may be combined with any number of suspensions without having to seek exceptions to the Board policy that limits extensions to two years.

One of my faculty members has already received two one-year extensions to the tenure clock for reasons unrelated to the COVID-pandemic. Are they eligible for an extension under this resolution?

Yes. Because the Board distinguishes between extensions given for the COVID-pandemic and those given for other reasons.

One of my faculty members has already received a one-year extension to the tenure clock for reasons related to the COVID-pandemic. Are they eligible for an additional year of extension under this resolution?

Yes. Faculty can request two total years of extension for reasons related to the COVID-pandemic.

One of my faculty members has already received two one-year extensions to the tenure clock for reasons related to the COVID-pandemic. Are they eligible for an extension under this resolution?

No. Faculty are limited to two total years of extension for reasons *related* to the COVID-pandemic.

If you have additional questions, please contact David White (dwhite25@utk.edu).

Please share this information with your faculty.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda C. Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "M".

Linda C. Martin, PhD
Interim Senior Vice Chancellor & Senior Vice President
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture