

2021

Equitable Evaluation During COVID

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EQUITABLE EVALUATION DURING COVID

WHY WOULD WE EVALUATE FACULTY DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Evaluating faculty must evolve, given that faculty experiences have differed during the pandemic. Yet, faculty need an opportunity to document their contributions and achievements, as well as the pandemic-related limitations they have experienced.

The goal is to enter this information into the record in a way that recognizes how each faculty member's *workload* (how much they were doing in different areas) and *work context* (where and how they did their work) have differed due to the pandemic, and that allows the university to account for the pandemic's long-term effects. Memories are short. When faculty are evaluated years down the road, the constraints they operated under must be recognized.

HOW HAVE EXPERIENCES DIFFERED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Please see the ADVANCE's [Documenting Pandemic Impacts](#) for a detailed summary. Substantial peer-reviewed research has shown that there are variations in faculty members' experiences by [field](#), [research method](#), [gender](#), [race](#), and [caregiver status](#). A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report, [The Impact of COVID-19 on the Careers of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#), identifies important differences in [research productivity](#), [work-life boundaries](#), [collaboration](#), [academic leadership](#), and [mental health](#).

If universities do not [revise how they evaluate faculty](#), it is likely that universities will become less diverse. A [University of Michigan report](#) warns "Do not let the 25% of faculty able to be more productive during the global pandemic set the standard for the 75% who are not able to do so."

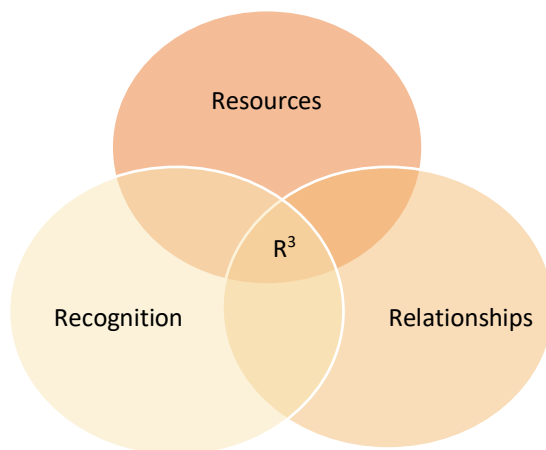
HOW CAN PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEMBERS OR CHAIRS/HEADS EVALUATE GIVEN THESE DIFFERENCES?

UMass ADVANCE suggests that evaluators consider our R^3 model, which emphasizes that faculty need *resources*, *relationships*, and *recognition* for successful careers. Evaluators can use faculty documentation to connect those faculty with the *resources* they need, help them build or rebuild *relationships* that can support them in moving forward in their career, and *recognize* the accomplishments that faculty have made despite specific pandemic-shaped contexts in



which they've been working. Evaluators should not blame faculty for things that they could not have been expected to plan for (such a pandemic).

The Provost provides guidance [regarding evaluations, including for promotion and tenure, and wording for external referees](#), which evaluators should first review. We next suggest that committee members read the following cases, and meet to discuss the questions listed below *before* evaluating colleagues. This process allows committees to create a baseline for [how they will engage with evaluation](#) at this time, as well as to determine how they will acknowledge and act upon any pandemic impact statement faculty make. These statements are not required missing statements do not mean that there was no impact.



CASE STUDIES FOR AFRS

- How should evaluators read pandemic statements? Should they comment on these statements in their remarks?
- How might evaluators respond to a person's work over the past year relative to their particular constraints and opportunities, rather than relative to their colleagues?
- Can pandemic statements "open communication" to allow for mentoring and advice to faculty

EQUITABLE EVALUATION DURING COVID

whose work has been upended in particular ways, following the R³ model?

Case One: I taught 3 courses online, and 1 course in person over 2020-21. The online courses required new pedagogical approaches; the in-person required more time to address health and safety concerns. Over 2020-21, I also had many more students in crisis than a normal year, and spent more time talking to or seeking out missing students. All told, teaching these courses took me much more time than I would expect in a regular academic year. Over 2020-21, due to increased pandemic stress, mentoring graduate students required additional time as well. This clearly impacted my time for research.

Case Two: As a new faculty in Fall 2020, it's hard to know the effect of the pandemic on my work. I have spent a great deal of time on teaching, as I had not ever taught online before, though I'm not sure how much of that time is also adjusting to a new institution. Some students just would stop coming to class, and my efforts to track them down took time. Other students met with me regularly, and needed a lot of emotional energy. I also didn't get to know my colleagues. My research has been impacted by all of the extra time spent on teaching and meeting with students. I know I am spending less time than I'd like on research, but since it was my first year, I don't know unusual this is, whether it's the transition to being a faculty member or the pandemic.

Case Three: The unexpected and immediate shutdown of the university meant that my lab (one postdoc, three PhD students) lost cell lines that are crucial to my groups' research agenda. Once the university reopened, we began to regrow these lines, but we are far behind our projected timeline as a result.

Case Four: My research focuses on homeless shelters in New Delhi. Since March 2020, I have not been able to travel there given university regulations; India remains on the "do not travel" list and it's unclear when I will be able to reengage. I have pivoted to some online data collection, though this limits my access considerably.

Case Five: As program coordinator, I spent approximately 60 extra hours helping students replace required in-person internships with other opportunities that would fulfill our requirements. I also developed an online graduation ceremony; while the in-person ceremony also requires work, this took additional time splicing videos and creating an effective online experience.

Case Six: As an expert in racial justice, I was called on by local leaders as well as journalists to address inequities in policing in the wake of George Floyd's murder, as well as

racial inequalities in COVID deaths. This work took a great deal of time over 2020-21, at a time when I was already unusually stretched thin.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Evaluators should consider the following questions in evaluating colleagues up for personnel actions. Responses to these questions are contextual; consider department, university, and discipline expectations in determining how to equitably evaluate faculty.

- How should evaluators address changes in research, teaching, and service due to the pandemic?
- Should evaluators encourage colleagues to take multiple tenure delays to "catch up," or go up for tenure even if their records reflect pandemic impacts, so they can move on with their lives?
- How should we use pandemic impact statements in evaluations? Do we need to know the specific pandemic effects on faculty to create equitable outcomes?

Next, we offer three accounts of faculty and how they have been impacted by the pandemic, followed by guiding discussion questions for evaluators. These accounts are fictional but include real examples of impacts on faculty.

Case on Professor Jackson: Before the pandemic, Professor Jackson was publishing articles, and well on her way to creating a competitive research portfolio. Professor Jackson has not given any talks since Fall 2019. A large longitudinal study funded by a major grant is now complete, but she was not able to collect outcome data. At her mini-tenure she noted she planned to submit a related grant proposal in 2020-21, but it was not submitted. Currently, she has less in the pipeline than a tenure candidate would normally have, in part due to the loss of the longitudinal study. Her teaching evaluations are fair to good; some students note that she is not "warm" enough. She has more doctoral students than most assistant professors; they are mostly students of color. She has served on more committees than most, doing both department and college service, and is known to be thorough though overcommitted. She does service outside the university, including speaking about the racial consequences of the pandemic. She took a one-year tenure delay, but is now up for tenure.

Jackson Pandemic Impact Statement (shared internally): The pandemic has had a large impact on my work. My conference presentations were canceled in both 2020

EQUITABLE EVALUATION DURING COVID

and Spring 2021. My large longitudinal study was disrupted by the pandemic; the outcome data could not be collected, so I am not sure how to publish from it. My teaching, mentoring, and service work has also taken more time than normally, making it challenging to spend time pivoting my research. Many of my students have suffered from the impact of COVID, as well as racist violence against Black people, and have needed many one-on-one meetings with me.

- How should evaluators approach this case?
- Would evaluators read this case any differently if she had also shared this: “My father, who worked in a nursing home and lived with me, and I both got COVID in March 2020. My father was hospitalized and died a few weeks later.”

Case on Professor Reddy: Professor Reddy submitted her portfolio for promotion in Summer 2021. Although she had a strong case, since Spring 2020 a number of her papers have been under review for long periods without a decision, and she has only recently been able to restart her research, given COVID protocols. While her colleagues encouraged her to go up for promotion, since her record is comparable to recently promoted colleagues, two of the letters from external reviewers have concerns.

- *When I compare Professor Reddy to colleagues who have received tenure in the field over the last five years, it appears that she has published slightly less than the norm.*
- *With her record, while Professor Reddy may earn tenure at University of Massachusetts, but she would not necessarily be tenured at my institution.*

The other four letters are more enthusiastic and emphatic in recommending promotion. UMass asks reviewers to take the pandemic into account (“*Research disruptions, significant shifts in teaching modalities, limited childcare, and remote work persisted into spring of 2021. We ask that you take this unprecedented event into consideration when evaluating work performed during 2020-2021*”), but none of the reviewers commented on the pandemic.

- How should evaluators read and interpret these letters and incorporate them?

Case on Professor Torres: Prof. Torres began as an assistant professor two years ago, and was publishing and submitting grants pre-pandemic. He attends fewer conferences each year than colleagues, but has been active on committees on the disciplinary level. He is seen to be a strong teacher and mentor. Before the pandemic, he was very active in the department, creating opportunities for students and faculty to give working

papers. Currently, Prof. Torres’ research productivity is suffering. He has submitted one grant that was not funded, but has no new publications. He appears to have some papers in the pipeline, though it’s unclear how far along they are. Even with a year’s tenure delay, it’s not clear that he will be able to “catch up.”

Torres Pandemic Impact Statement shared internally:

Since March 2020, my workload has shifted. Initially, I was very involved in helping my colleagues move their courses online, since I had more experience with online teaching tools. Online teaching also took me extra time, as I reworked my courses. As the father of three young children, I also had to shift my work substantially when school and childcare closed in Spring 2020. My wife is a nurse who must work in person, and has at times quarantined elsewhere to avoid exposing the family to COVID-19. Beginning in Spring 2021, my two older children were able to return to school, though my youngest was still at home with me. I have continued working on research during weekends and evenings when feasible, but the pandemic has been disruptive.

- How should evaluators approach this case? What mentoring does Professor Torres need?

WHERE CAN I FIND RESOURCES FOR EVALUATION AT UMASS?

The [UMass Provost’s office](#) includes specific guidance for evaluations. Amel Ahmed, [Associate Provost for Equity & Inclusion](#), Michelle Budig, [Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs](#), and Michael Eagen, [Associate Provost for Academic Personnel](#) provide bias training to personnel committees and further guidance. Questions can go to academic.personnel@umass.edu.

The [Massachusetts Society of Professors](#) (MSP), the faculty union, provides workshops for personnel committee members, and other materials on its [website](#). Contact [the union](#) for further guidance.

The [Office of Faculty Development](#) provides many resources and support for career and leadership development. Contact: OFD@umass.edu

[UMass ADVANCE](#) provides support, workshops and consultations for both faculty members preparing for evaluations and evaluators during the pandemic. Contact: [Joya Misra](#)

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