

DEO ESSENTIALS

Faculty Annual Evaluations in the Context of COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has impacted the lives and work of faculty in many ways, with those impacts varying with respect to both type and degree. The university response to the pandemic also had differential implications for faculty based on what they teach, prior experience with hybrid classes and technology, and individual and family risk factors with respect to COVID-19. The sentiment is captured by the idea that “[we are all in the same storm, but not the same boat.](#)” Individual faculty members have each faced unique and different challenges that may have had substantial consequences for their professional work. Faculty of color, women, and members of other marginalized groups have been shown to have experienced especially significant impacts.

The pandemic will have long-lasting implications for many faculty members. This document aims to provide advice to DEOs regarding performing faculty annual evaluations in an equitable way in this context.

PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY IN SUBMITTAL OF MATERIALS

Consider providing faculty members with options regarding materials to be submitted for annual evaluation to reduce the burden of preparing materials. For example, faculty might choose between the regular, established department review documents or a more abbreviated version, as determined at the unit/department level. In addition, if your unit requires faculty to submit peer-evaluations of teaching, consider making these optional for 2020 and/or using them towards formative, rather than summative, assessment. Traditional peer evaluation methods for in-class teaching may not be fully applicable to online/hybrid methods, particularly when the change in delivery mode happened very quickly.

INVITE A COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

Explicitly providing a mechanism for faculty to document the impacts of the pandemic on their work sends a clear message that the unit (and the university) understands that the current circumstances have affected the ability of faculty to do their work. We recommend that you invite faculty to write a COVID-19 Pandemic Impact Statement, but this should be an optional, rather than required, component of the annual evaluation packet. While requiring all faculty to submit this statement with their annual evaluation materials may remove the stigma that some faculty may feel in submitting such a statement, preparing such a statement requires extra work of the faculty member, especially for those who have had more extensive impacts. Moreover, we recognize that some faculty members might not feel comfortable sharing more personal ways in which they have been impacted by the pandemic, and requiring them to submit a statement could put them in a difficult position. Proactively inviting, but not requiring, faculty to include a COVID-19 impact statement reduces the stigma without demanding extra work of faculty or putting them in uncomfortable positions. For faculty who do wish to prepare and submit such a statement, the document [Writing a COVID-19 Impact Statement: Suggested Prompts](#) provides a list of prompts regarding the types of impact that are important to document and should ease some of the cognitive burden. Note that the *Suggested Prompts* document leads faculty to include both positive and negative impacts, with an example of a positive impact being the development of teaching innovations that improve the learning experience for students and could continue after the pandemic.

GUIDELINES FOR PERFORMING ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

Since recommendations can have differential meaning or impacts within units and colleges, please consider the recommendations below and employ local faculty governance processes before implementing them for your unit.

- Attend to measures applied in normal years, while at the same time be fully aware that 2020 has brought unprecedented disruption and obstacles in unique and varying ways. If possible, provide support to faculty who face extraordinary demands and, in keeping with established best practices, use uniform criteria for

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evaluating faculty. The simultaneous budget challenges and pandemic impacts may have prevented units from leveling workloads in ways that give faculty similar opportunities to thrive; considering differences in burdens and opportunities in the evaluations is consistent with an equity framework.

- Remind evaluators that evaluations are important for recognizing outstanding work and activity which will help retain top performing faculty.
- Remind evaluators that the events of 2020 created unique circumstances and that appropriate grace should be provided based upon faculty impact statement information.
- As recommended by the [ASPIRE document](#), reviews should “acknowledge and affirm” if there are slowdowns in productivity but the evaluation emphasis should remain on rewarding productivity without doing additional harm to those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- Consider short-term apportionment changes to align with how time was spent in 2020.
- Focus reviews more on qualitative assessment of substantial contributions rather than strictly quantitative measures.
- Consider the trajectory of work in the year prior to the pandemic so the evaluation does not rest solely upon the work in 2020.
- Consider formative goal setting in the context of current circumstances rather than a more traditional summative evaluation produced in normal years.

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