

## COVID-19 IMPACT FAQs

The Provost's Memo dated April 20, 2020 outlined a plan for adjustments to tenure and other faculty events due to the impact of Covid-19. That memo was updated with a memo dated December 7, 2020. This FAQ provides additional details to that plan.

### **1. Does the extension outlined in that memo cover faculty who started in the 2020-2021 academic year?**

Yes, we have received approval from the USG to extend the applicability of the adjustments to faculty tenure and similar events that were outlined in the Provost's Memo by allowing those adjustments to apply to faculty whose first year of service would be AY2020-2021. Specifically, faculty hired from Oct. 16, 2019-Oct. 15, 2020 will be granted the adjustments outlined in an email sent by the provost on April 20, 2020, including the automatic extension to the probationary period for untenured faculty.

### **2. Am I eligible for the Covid-related extension if I have already received two extensions for the probationary period?**

The USG 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 avenue, 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 and receive approval by the unit head (usually the school chair), dean, vice provost for graduate education and faculty development, provost, and president.

### **3. The original Covid extension announced in the April 2020 Provost memo was for the Academic Year 2019-2020, yet the Covid pandemic lasted through Academic Year 2020-2021. Is there a possibility of getting an additional Covid-related extension for Critical Reviews and for Tenure for AY 2020-2021?**

There is no second Covid-related extension for the probationary period. The Faculty Handbook, [Section 3.3.5](#), does provide a process for faculty to submit requests for an extension to the probationary period for tenure when circumstances cause substantial impairment of a candidate's ability to pursue his or her teaching and scholarly activities. Such circumstances may include severe personal illness, childbirth, adoption, or other significant obligations to a member of the family or household. The probationary period may not be interrupted for more than one (1) year per event with a maximum extension of two (2) years. Requests for an extension of the probationary period must be made in writing and submitted to the appropriate Unit Head (Dean/Chair) who will review the request. All requests must be made within twelve (12) months of the event related to the extension request. Any supporting documentation should be attached to the request. Circumstances that occurred during the pandemic that might be considered for justification under this policy include having young children at home due to closures of in-person operations at daycare centers and schools, serious personal or family health issues, or long-term research lab closures. Requests for extension to the Probationary Period for Tenure are not granted automatically and are at the discretion of the President. Full-time faculty wishing to request an extension to the probationary period for tenure under the conditions outlined in the [Faculty Handbook Section 3.3.5](#) should complete [this form](#) and submit it to the appropriate Unit Head (Dean/Chair) who will review the request.

**4. How do I reflect the impact of external, personal, professional, or health events (including Covid-19) on my work in my critical review, tenure, or promotion package?**

If desired, faculty can address Covid-19 impacts in their (1) five-page narrative (such as adding a section entitled, "Covid impacts on professional activities"), (2) in their CV (i.e., marking cancelled seminars or conference talks, loss in funded awards, graduate students who discontinued their studies, etc., with a notation, "Cancelled due to Covid-19" or "Returned to home country due to Covid-19"), (3) in their teaching portfolio (for lecturers), and/or (4) in an addendum (limited to two pages in standard formatting). The addendum would be uploaded into PROMOTE in the background section and would be viewable to internal reviewers only, and not to external reviewers.

**5. As a reviewer, either on a committee or as an administrator, how do I account for the impact of Covid-19 or other significant personal, professional, or health events on a candidate's package?**

For reviews on a timed basis (such as critical review and tenure), the candidate may be approved for an extension to the probationary period based on the terms outlined in the Provost's memo. In extension cases, the review is typically done without regard to the circumstance of the disruptive event, since that event has been accounted for in the extension. The additional time should not factor into the evaluation. It should be recognized that the Covid effects on some faculty will be prolonged and not fully mitigated with a one-year extension. Reflecting on circumstances seems critical to a fair review process.

For cases that are not on a timed basis, such as promotion to full professor or promotion in non-tenure track ranks, the review can take into consideration the circumstances of the disruption in the candidate's performance.

Faculty committees should consider the many dimensions by which a candidate's progress, particularly related to research, may have been affected by Covid19, including but not limited to:

- Changing household circumstances due to lockdown, including school and childcare closures, spread of illness, and unemployment of family members.
- Loss of access to labs, both Georgia Tech facilities and national labs, a circumstance likely to have impacts beyond the next year, due to cascading scheduling.
- Loss of access to archives, library materials, and fieldwork sites.
- Long-term disruption of research involving human subjects or fieldwork due to Institute-required stoppages and also the difficulty of recruiting participants during the pandemic.
- Shift in intellectual focus of scholarship from experiments to modeling, which may be less effective or publishable in some research areas.
- Loss of previous funding and lack of new funding, particular concerns for those relying on industry relationships.
- Impacts of changes to less familiar instructional modes (i.e., online and hybrid) influencing student evaluations of teaching, perhaps based on individual student preference for in-person or online mode of delivery.
- Being enlisted to teach less familiar or new courses due to program needs.
- Fewer opportunities to teach specialized, smaller-enrollment courses because of fewer on-campus students.

- Fewer opportunities to teach since some faculty were encouraged to reduce program budgets by buying out courses, resulting in fewer teaching evaluations.
- Slowed student progress toward a degree. For example, expectations that assistant professors will have graduated doctoral students in some degree programs prior to tenure should be moderated.
- Fewer new international graduate students and postdocs being able to enter the United States, impacting advising of students and research productivity of faculty.
- Students and visiting scholars interrupting or discontinuing their studies and work to return to their home countries.
- Cancelled opportunities to present at conferences, which diminishes opportunities for networking, visibility, and professional service.
- Lost opportunities for seminar visits.
- Diminished research outcomes due to lockdown and budgetary problems affecting publication venues (e.g., journals and presses).
- Greater difficulty in obtaining external references, due to increased faculty workload around the world.
- Taking on different roles to help with budgets, teaching, and student expectations/needs during this changing time.

Some of these effects can be quantified, and faculty have been allowed to footnote events and opportunities that would have occurred (e.g., seminar visits and conference talks) or which were impacted (e.g., grant budget reductions or stoppages) by the pandemic with a footnote “Cancelled due to Covid-19.” Other effects cannot be captured in a CV or a narrative statement, and reviewers are encouraged to reflect on the well-documented effects of Covid19, especially on women, black, LatinX, AAPI, and Middle Eastern faculty, see for example references [1]-[4].

**6. Is there a mechanism to get an extension on my PPR review?**

Normally, PPR for tenured faculty occurs on a three or five-year cycle with possible extensions to account for approved leaves of absence. A personnel transaction, such as promotion, award of Regents Professor/Researcher, or appointment to/return from an administrative appointment, resets the start of the five-year period. If there is a major personal, health, or other external event that significantly impacts the performance of a faculty member, that faculty member can request an extension that would delay the time of the next review. The request would be submitted through GT-TRACS and must be approved by the unit head (or school chair), the dean, and vice provost for graduate education and faculty development. For Covid-related requests, there needs to be some extenuating circumstances beyond Covid, such as significant personal or health issues.

**7. Suppose that I go up for tenure at the normal time (in my sixth year) and am denied tenure. Can I use the Covid-19 extension after that to get an additional year?**

The original memo extends the timeline for when a faculty member must go up for tenure and when a faculty member receives a terminal contract. To illustrate the timelines for faculty actions, see the table below. As indicated in that table, someone who has applied for tenure in their sixth year and was denied does have two more opportunities to apply.

Year of Service	Faculty Actions
1	

2	
3	may apply for third year critical review
4	must apply for third year critical review (if not already done)
5	may apply for tenure
6	may apply for tenure
7	must apply for tenure
8	may apply for tenure. The faculty member has a terminal year contract and must leave at the end of the academic year tenure is not granted.

**8. Clarification of “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.” What does that mean?**

Definitions:

*Original clock* = the tenure clock that a faculty member was hired onto

*Covid-extended clock* = the tenure clock that a faculty member moves on to when taking the one-year extension

Scenarios:

1) At critical review a faculty member **does not take** the Covid-19 extension.

a) At tenure on the *original clock* the faculty member goes up under normal tenure evaluation criteria.  
OR.

b) At tenure on the *original clock* the faculty member takes the Covid-19 extension and now is on the *Covid-extended clock* and goes up under normal tenure evaluation criteria the following year.

2) At critical review a faculty member **takes** the Covid-19 extension.

a) At tenure on the *original clock* the faculty member goes up under normal tenure evaluation criteria.  
OR.

b) At tenure on the *original clock* the faculty member may continue to stay on the *Covid-extended clock* and go up for tenure under the normal tenure evaluation criteria the following year.

The independence described in the memo is the choice to take the extension but then also to change back later. *The Covid-19 extension does not change the first year that a faculty member may go up for tenure, it changes the last year that they may go up.*

**9. I would like to document the impact of Covid-19 in my annual review. What do you suggest that I do?**

Chairs and supervisors should complete faculty annual reviews in the context of Covid. Faculty should make their chair (or direct supervisor) aware of Covid-19 impacts on their performance in their annual review materials. Include cancelled seminars or conference talks, loss in funded awards, etc., with a notation, “Cancelled due to Covid-19”.

## References

- [1] Frederickson, M. (2020). COVID-19's gendered impact on academic productivity. In: GitHub. <https://github.com/drfreder/pandemic-pub-bias>
- [2] Jessica L. Malisch, et al. (2020). In the wake of COVID-19, academia needs new solutions to ensure gender equity. <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/27/15378>
- [3] American Medical Association newsletter: <https://newsletter.ama-assn.org/downloads/20-473689-CHE-Latinx-COVID-19-report.pdf>
- [4] Don Bambino Geno Tai, et al., (2020), The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the United States. <https://academic.oup.com/cid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cid/ciaa815/5860249>

Suggested by Cassie Sugimoto, incoming Public Policy chair: Consider adding this citation to References--  
<https://www.natureindex.com/news-blog/decline-women-scientist-research-publishing-production-coronavirus-pandemic>