

POLICY ON INTERRUPTIONS OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD (TENURE CODE ROLLBACKS)

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
COMMUNICATION No. 16

**For information on the “Effect of Leave Without Pay on the Probationary Period” see Communication No. 15.*

Overview

Article X, Section 1.b.(1) of the University Statutes states, “An appointee receiving a first contract for more than fifty percent (50%) of full-time service at this University as assistant professor enters a probationary period not to exceed seven academic years of service....” Normally, the probationary period is a consecutive set of years. However, an appointee can be granted an interruption in the probationary period by special written agreement when unusual, compelling circumstances arise. This policy elaborates on the language “unusual, compelling circumstances” and “special written agreement.”

Purpose

It is in the best interest of the University to promote and to tenure a faculty of the highest quality in ways that are fair and humane. To ensure fairness and equity in administering the system of academic tenure—both of which are mandatory for the defense of the tenure system—the University must provide consistent conditions and standards. For these reasons, interruptions of the probationary period are reserved for unusual, compelling circumstances. However, such circumstances can arise, and a rollback permits a response when the circumstances impair the ability of an individual to establish the stature expected of faculty members at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, within the normal time frame. The University’s ability to attract and retain a faculty of the highest quality—a most critical interest—is enhanced by supporting members in balancing personal and family obligations with professional and scholarly achievement.

Because our institution permits one or more tenure clock rollbacks during the pre-tenure period, the criteria for promotion and tenure at Illinois are the same for all faculty regardless of length of service during the probationary period. Letters to external evaluators should indicate our policy on tenure rollbacks (see Provost’s Communication No. 9).

Conditions

An interruption of the probationary period (“rollback in the tenure code”) may be granted for one year upon request when an event or compelling circumstances cause substantial impairment of a candidate’s ability to pursue his or her teaching, scholarly activities, and/or service. Ordinarily, no more than two such rollbacks will be granted.

There are three grounds for granting a rollback. First, a rollback may be granted in the case of extended and/or severe personal illness. Second, a rollback may be granted for compelling obligations to a member of the family or household that require significant time away from University duties. Except in extraordinary circumstances, a rollback will be granted in the event of the birth or adoption of a child under 6 years old. Third, a rollback may be granted under circumstances beyond the control of the faculty member, such as grave administrative error or other unusual, compelling circumstances beyond the control of the faculty member.

The candidate's record before the event must be consistent with the preservation of institutional quality. The criterion on this aspect is that the candidate is making appropriate, demonstrable progress toward attaining indefinite tenure. In the case of childbirth or adoption, this criterion is deemed to be satisfied automatically if the unit intends to reappoint the candidate in the following academic year.

Timing of Requests

An interruption of the probationary period should be requested when it becomes clear that circumstances, consistent with this policy, will substantially impede the faculty member's progress toward achieving indefinite tenure. Requests during the sixth year of the probationary period (i.e., when the faculty member's tenure code has already reached 6) are strongly discouraged and will be granted only in rare and extraordinary circumstances. The basis for this policy is that a candidate with tenure code 6 has already fully assembled the record to be used in the mandatory review for promotion and tenure. Exceptional circumstances intervening at that point cannot affect the reviewable record.

Unit executive officers that recognize the need for a faculty member to request an interruption of the probationary period are encouraged to discuss this policy with that individual and to do so in a timely manner. Faculty members should feel free to approach their unit heads for information concerning this policy or with individual requests for an interruption.

In order to process the appropriate documents, it is important that requests for rollbacks be forwarded in time to reach the Provost's Office prior to May 15 to be effective for the following academic year. If a request arrives later than May 15, the request will be considered, but a rollback in the tenure code may not take place until a year in the future; in other words, the tenure track year would remain the same instead of moving forward for the upcoming year.

Procedures

REQUESTS OTHER THAN THOSE BASED ON CHILDBIRTH OR ADOPTION

Requests for rollbacks other than those based on childbirth or adoption will be reviewed and considered carefully at each level. A request on the part of a faculty member does not guarantee that the request will be approved. The following is the procedure for submitting such a request:

1. The request for an interruption of the probationary period must be initiated in writing by the faculty member and addressed to the executive officer of the unit. The faculty

member should attach a copy of a current curriculum vitae and any appropriate supporting documentation to the request.

2. The executive officer of the unit will review the request in consultation with the body that normally acts on promotion and tenure in the unit.
3. If, as a result of the review, the unit executive officer decides to support the request, the executive officer will forward it to the next administrative level, along with a completed transmittal form (Attachment 1) and an evaluative statement addressing the faculty member's scholarly progress:
 - a. If the next level is a school or college level, it is recommended that the body normally acting on promotion and tenure (e.g., the Executive Committee) be consulted. If the request receives a positive review, the dean or director will forward it to the Provost for approval. The dean or director may comment on the case as required.
 - b. If the decision lies in a college, school, or institution that is not subdivided, then the dean or director prepares the evaluative statement and forwards the documented request to the Provost, who serves as the reviewing officer. The Provost will consult in extraordinary cases with the Chair of the Campus Committee on Promotion and Tenure.
4. Upon approval by the Provost, a special written agreement outlining terms and conditions will be prepared by the Office of Academic Human Resources, in consultation with Legal Counsel. The agreement will specify the reasons for the rollback and will clearly state the faculty member's new tenure code. The special written agreement will be circulated to obtain the signature of the faculty member and the signatures of the campus officials required for such agreements.
5. Confidentiality relating to the grounds of the request will be maintained to the extent possible and as allowed by law.

ROLLBACKS BASED ON CHILDBIRTH OR ADOPTION

Requests for rollbacks based on childbirth or adoption do not involve a review of academic progress beyond a decision on reappointment for the following academic year. The following is the procedure for submitting these requests:

1. The request for an interruption of the probationary period must be initiated in writing by the faculty member and addressed to the executive officer of the unit.
2. If the executive officer of the unit judges that qualifying circumstances exist and can certify the intention to continue the faculty member's appointment for the next academic year, then the executive officer endorses the request and forwards it, along with the completed transmittal form (Attachment 1) to the next administrative level:

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- a. If the next level is a school or college, the dean or director will review the papers to see that qualifying circumstances from the basis of the case and that the executive officer has addressed the question of continued appointment. If the case is in order, then the dean or director will endorse it and forward it to the Provost for approval. The dean or director may comment on the case as required.
 - b. If the decision lies in a college, school, or institution that is not subdivided, then the dean or director prepares the certifying statement and forwards the documented request to the Provost, who serves as the reviewing officer.
3. Upon approval by the Provost, a special written agreement outlining terms and conditions will be prepared by the Office of Academic Human Resources, in consultation with Legal Counsel. The agreement will specify the reasons for the rollback and will clearly state the faculty member's new tenure code. The special written agreement will be circulated to obtain the signature of the faculty member and the signatures of the campus officials required for such agreements.
 4. Confidentiality relating to the grounds of the request will be maintained to the extent possible and as allowed by law.

Appeals of Adverse Decisions

If a faculty member's request for a rollback is denied at the departmental or unit level, the faculty member may appeal that decision within the procedures established by that unit. If, after that review, the unit executive officer affirms the denial, that administrator must forward the decision and supporting documentation to the next level administrator for review of the procedures used by the unit.

If the reviewing administrator finds that the procedures used by the department or unit were unsatisfactory, the originating unit must reconsider the case. If the procedures were satisfactory, but the reviewing administrator questions the basis for denial, then the reviewing administrator shall consult with the originating executive officer about that basis. Although the originating executive officer retains discretion to deny the request, this consultation is mandated to insure that disparities do not arise among departments in granting requests for interruptions of the probationary period.

If the denial of the interruption in the probationary period is made at the campus level, the Campus Promotion and Tenure Committee will serve as the reviewing committee and the Chancellor will be the administrator to review the procedures.

At any point in the process of appeal, the faculty member may consult with or take a formal grievance to the Faculty Advisory Committee or the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure.

Assistance

Questions relating to use of these procedures should be directed to the Office of Academic Human Resources (333-6747). Questions about academic policy or the status of individual cases and appeals should be directed to the Office of the Provost (333-6677).

Attachment

Transmittal Form for:

Tenure Rollback Request (Attachment 1)

**Transmittal for
Tenure Rollback Request**

In accordance with Provost Communication No. 16, please complete this transmittal, along with attachments, and submit to the Office of the Provost.

Date: _____

Name of faculty member: _____

UIN: _____

Tenure Code (Academic Year): _____

Department/Unit: _____

College: _____

Reason for rollback (indicate below):

- Extended and/or severe personal illness
- Compelling obligations to a member of the family or household that required significant time away from University duties
- Childbirth or adoption
- Compelling circumstances beyond faculty member's control (e.g., grave administrative error)
- Other _____

ATTACHMENTS

- Faculty member's current curriculum vitae (only in cases other than childbirth or adoption)
- Faculty member's supporting documentation for the request
- Letter of request from faculty member to unit executive officer
- Letter of request from unit executive officer to Dean or Director
- Letter of request from Dean or Director to Provost

APPROVALS

(For members who have joint appointments, recommendations must be approved by all units.)

Department _____ School _____ College _____

Department _____ School _____ College _____

Provost Approval: _____
Provost or Designee
Date

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
ADDENDUM TO COMMUNICATION No. 16

Tenure Rollback Policy for COVID-19

The university recognizes that the needed changes in how we conduct our teaching, research, and service to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have raised concerns among many of our junior and mid-career faculty members, particularly on its potential impact on promotion and tenure. It is our goal to minimize the effects of these ensuing changes at the university on their careers.

Tenure Code Rollbacks

For probationary faculty, the University already has a robust tenure rollback policy ([Provost Communication #16](#)). During this crisis, we intend to interpret this policy generously and compassionately. Therefore, rollbacks will be available to probationary faculty members (tenure codes 1-5) who believe COVID-19 creates a significant disruption to their progress towards tenure and promotion, whether it is because, among other things, research is interrupted due to inaccessible facilities and space, the faculty member has to care for family members affected by the COVID-19 situation, or the faculty member becomes ill.

The process for applying for a rollback due to COVID-19 is streamlined:

1. The faculty member emails a one-sentence request for a tenure rollback relating to COVID-19 to IHR-TR@illinois.edu. Documentation (*e.g.* CV, letter justifying the request, etc.) is not necessary.
2. Illinois Human Resources will create a request form (an Adobe Sign document) to route for signatures (starting with the faculty member).
3. The request form (the Adobe Sign document) will be routed to the faculty member, the Unit Executive Officer, School Director, as applicable, and Dean. Letters of support are not necessary. That is, approval requires only a signature and date on this form.
4. The form will then be routed to the Office of the Provost for final approval and processing. When routing is complete at all levels, the faculty member will receive the fully signed version and his/her tenure year will be adjusted.

Probationary faculty in tenure code 5 (*i.e.*, those who are scheduled to be reviewed in AY 2020-21) and Q appointments scheduled to be reviewed in AY 2020-21 must apply for a rollback by April 24, 2020.

Faculty in tenure code 4 may apply for a rollback based on COVID-19 consideration until April 15, 2021. Faculty in tenure codes 1-3 may apply for a rollback based on COVID-19 considerations until August 15, 2021. After that date, requests will follow regular procedures and will be evaluated according to the criteria stated in Communication #16.

Rollback requests for COVID-19 will not count against any limit on the overall number of rollbacks.

Consistent with existing policy, faculty who take a rollback for COVID-19-related reasons may later choose to apply for tenure “early” (*i.e.*, on a timeline consistent with their original tenure clock) if they choose to do so.

ICES Scores

At this point, we plan to provide students with the opportunity to provide feedback on all courses through online ICES at the end of the Spring 2020 semester. Many faculty members use student comments and suggestions to improve course delivery. For purposes of evaluation of tenure and promotion, faculty may choose to exclude Spring 2020 ICES scores from the P&T dossier. Specialized faculty will also have the option to exclude Spring 2020 ICES scores from their promotion dossier.

Timeline for P&T Process for AY 2020-21

We are aware that circumstances may cause delays and difficulties in processing dossiers. We currently intend to operate on the usual timeline for the promotion and tenure process for AY 2020-21 as much as possible. We may reevaluate the timeline over the summer as we better understand the evolving impact of the situation.

Questions about rollbacks and promotion processes should be directed to [Bill Bernhard](#), Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.