



Spring 2021

To: Department Chairs, Directors, and Deans
From: Alan Carroll, Outgoing Chair and Thad Walker, Incoming Chair, Physical Sciences Divisional Committee
Re: Submission of Tenure Review Documents for 2021-2022

Please share this letter with all assistant professors in your department, as well as the chairs of mentoring committees for junior faculty.

Documents relevant to the submission of tenure dossiers to the Physical Sciences Divisional Executive Committee (PSDC), including tenure guidelines and a checklist of required materials are available at: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/physical-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/>. Based on recent tenure cases, we bring your attention to the following issues:

- *Tenure Clock Extensions.* Tenure clock extensions (e.g., due to COVID and/or maternity/paternity leave) are not considered negatively, whether they are used or not.
- *“Early” Applications.* The PSDC judges each candidate according to their accomplishments, independent of the actual time spent in the probationary period. While most candidates require the full tenure clock in order to meet the expected level of accomplishment for tenure, a department may submit a candidate before then if it is clear that the accomplishments of the candidate merit it. It is important to note, however, that candidates are only evaluated by the committee once, [by agreement of all four faculty divisions](#). For candidates with competing outside offers for whom tenure consideration is part of a retention package, the situation should be explained in the Chair’s letter and the level of urgency should be noted in Section K: Urgency of the tenure dossier.
- *COVID.* The PSDC recognizes that COVID-related challenges are experienced differently by different candidates. The PSDC is committed to thoughtful consideration of these challenges in making its recommendations. As described in the tenure guidelines, the dossier may include an optional statement describing the impact of COVID on the candidate’s accomplishments.
- *Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness.* For promotions, the committee expects to see the results of annual departmental peer review of teaching. These reviews are meant to be evaluative and are important complements to student evaluations. A suggested form for peer evaluation of teaching is available on the website linked above. Other evidence of instructor effectiveness is welcome.

- *Soliciting Letters of Evaluation.* The dossier must include a *minimum of five* “arm’s-length” letters from experts who can provide objective evaluations. Letters from individuals such as the candidate’s PhD advisor, postdoctoral supervisors, frequent collaborators, recipients of joint funding, or others who may have a conflict of interest in the candidate or his/her work are **not** “arm’s length” and are given reduced weight by the committee. In general, the candidate should not be consulted in the selection of letter writers. The committee strongly discourages informal contact (e.g., by phone or email) with letter writers prior to formal solicitation. All formal or informal correspondence with letter writers should be documented. Please specify whether evaluators received the full dossier to review, and keep in mind that all materials provided to the letter writers must be included in the dossier.
- *Appointments.* Senior hires are generally evaluated for tenure only after they have accepted an offer. If there are extenuating circumstances that require evaluation prior to acceptance, please contact us with details *before* submitting a tenure dossier. In addition to the guidelines re: letters provided above, departments should explicitly note whether any writers of letters for the dossier also wrote letters for the candidate’s job application to UW-Madison.
- *Example Dossiers.* An annotated composite tenure dossier and other sample dossiers are available for review in the Divisional Committees office, 133 Bascom Hall. *We strongly urge candidates and department chairs (or others responsible for preparing tenure packages) to examine these documents.* An incomplete or poorly prepared tenure dossier may be returned to the department for revision without review. Pre-tenure faculty members are encouraged to begin constructing tenure dossiers in their first year at UW.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months. Please contact Thad Walker (tgwalker@wisc.edu or 608-262-4093) or Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 608-263-5741) if we can be of assistance.