



Faculty Ranks, Continuance, Promotion, and Tenure

New Faculty Orientation
August 16, 2018

Tenure-Eligible Faculty Ranks at WKU

Assistant Professor

Associate Professor

Professor

Pedagogical Assistant Professor

Pedagogical Associate Professor

Pedagogical Professor

Non-Tenure Eligible Faculty Ranks at WKU

Clinical Assistant Professor

Clinical Associate Professor

Clinical Professor

Instructor I

Instructor II

Senior Instructor

Research faculty ranks are applicable to externally-funded and self-supported positions

Lecturers are fixed-term, and made for ABD individuals hired into tenure-eligible positions

Other fixed-term special appointments exist as well (e.g., Visiting, In-Residence)

Tenure vs. Promotion

Full-time faculty in all categories have the opportunity for promotion to higher rank

Rank is granted based on academic qualifications, experience, and demonstrated achievement

The department head and faculty establish criteria for demonstrated/sustained achievement for each rank, in conformity with minimum university standards adopted by the Board of Regents



Tenure is a means to achieve such goals as (1) academic freedom, (2) economic security, and (3) institutional continuity and stability

Tenure is associated with a particular department/school, based on sustainable productivity



While often coupled in time, promotion and tenure are fundamentally separate concepts and processes

There is no provision to directly transfer between tenure- and non-tenure eligible ranks

Full-Time Faculty Appointments

Unless otherwise specified in writing, tenure-eligible faculty members are appointed with a probationary period leading to the mandatory tenure decision



Non-tenure eligible faculty may receive renewable annual or multi-year appointments, or be full-time, regular employees

Those on continuing contracts will be automatically renewed each year, based on good performance, availability of funding, and need



Lecturer appointments are for one year, renewable up to a maximum term of three years

When the doctoral degree is completed within the first two years, the faculty member is appointed as an Assistant Professor the following term and the probationary period commences



Special appointments are typically one-year, renewable

The Probationary Period

Typically, the length of the probationary period for tenure-eligible faculty is six years (5+1)

The probationary period can be shorter by mutual agreement, but never longer, per AAUP guidelines (but see below)



Each tenure-eligible faculty member has a defined mandatory tenure year; if tenure has not been granted at an earlier point in the probationary period, the candidate must apply for tenure at the beginning of the mandatory year



WKU Policy 1.124V allows for extension of the probationary period based on certain qualifying events

The first request for extension is automatically granted; an additional extension, or extension for other relevant events, is subject to approval by the college dean

No more than two extensions may be granted, and the length of the probationary period may not exceed eight years

Annual Evaluation and Continuance Review

All full-time faculty (tenure- and non-tenure eligible) prepare and submit annual activity reports, which are evaluated by the department head and the dean

Activity reports serve as the basis for cost-of-living and/or merit salary increases, as well as for renewal of continuing appointments of non-tenure eligible faculty



Tenure-eligible faculty in the probationary period are also evaluated annually on their progress toward tenure

Continuance materials are submitted to the department head by August 20 (January 25 in the first year) and reviewed in confidence by the department's continuance committee, typically including all tenured faculty

The continuance committee votes for or against continuance by secret ballot, and the committee chair submits a memorandum to the department head summarizing the committee discussion and reporting the vote count

Continuance recommendations are subsequently prepared and submitted by the department head to the dean, and by the dean to the Provost

Eligibility for Promotion

Eligibility is based on academic credentials, time in current rank, and a pattern of tangible and sustained achievement at a level appropriate for the rank being sought in the areas of teaching effectiveness, research/creative activity, and university/public service

Generally, a minimum of five years in current rank is required

In demonstrating sustained achievement, a candidate's entire body of work relevant to the area of professional competence is considered, with emphasis on contributions since the last promotion

For promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor, the standards in place at the time of first appointment apply, as indicated in the formal letter of appointment

The Promotion Process

Promotion materials are submitted to the department head by October 1, and reviewed in confidence by a departmental review committee

Promotion committees must consist of at least 5 members, and generally include all eligible tenured faculty in the same faculty category and of higher rank than the candidate

In the case of promotion of instructors, the review committee generally consists of a mixture of eligible tenured faculty and instructors of higher rank than the candidate



The review committee votes for or against continuance by secret ballot, and the committee chair submits a memorandum to the department head summarizing the committee discussion and reporting the vote count

Promotion actions are taken at up to six levels: recommendations by the review committee, department head, dean, Provost, and President, with final action by the Board of Regents (negative recommendations are not sent by the President to the Board)

Candidates are notified of the recommendations at each stage, and may withdraw their application at any point unless the application accompanies a mandatory tenure decision

Applying for Tenure

Tenure decisions are based on evidence of the candidate's outstanding performance in carrying out professional responsibilities during the probationary period

Decisions regarding tenure are based on performance in teaching, research/creative activity, and university/public service appropriate to the expectations of their position

It is also understood that the faculty member should cooperate in working with colleagues in carrying out the university's educational mission



A faculty member may apply for an early tenure decision; s/he must also apply for promotion to Associate Professor (if not already at that rank)

Early tenure will be granted only if the criteria for tenure have unquestionably been met

Candidates can withdraw applications for early tenure, but cannot withdraw from consideration during the mandatory tenure year (to do so constitutes *de facto* resignation from the university)

The Tenure Process

Tenure materials are submitted to the department head by October 1, and reviewed in confidence by a departmental tenure committee, typically including all tenured faculty

The tenure committee votes for or against tenure by secret ballot, and the committee chair submits a memorandum to the department head summarizing the committee discussion and reporting the vote count

Tenure actions are taken at six levels: recommendations by the review committee, department head, dean, Provost, and President, with final action by the Board of Regents

Candidates are notified of the recommendations at each stage, and may withdraw their application at any point unless the application comes during the mandatory tenure year

Two general rules regarding tenure apply at WKU: (1) No tenured Assistant Professors, and (2) No untenured (Full) Professors

The Benefits of Promotion and of Tenure

Promotion and/or tenure becomes effective July 1 of the academic year following the application/decision year

Promotion is accompanied by a raise equal to 10% of the university-wide median salary of faculty in the former (i.e., pre-promotion) rank

Tenure assures that a faculty member can be dismissed only for cause, or by a decision by the Board of Regents that termination is necessary due to financial exigency or changed academic program needs

In the case of both financial exigency and changing academic program needs, the university will make a reasonable effort to offer the tenured faculty another position within the institution for which they are qualified by education and experience

In addition, unless serious program distortion would result, tenured faculty will have preference over non-tenured faculty and tenured faculty of lesser rank and/or time in rank

The Complaint Process

In the case of official notification from the President of a negative continuance, promotion, and/or tenure recommendation, a faculty member has the option to file a complaint in accordance with procedures outlined in Section V of the Faculty Handbook

Valid bases for complaint include decisions that can be documented to have been arbitrary and capricious, violated standards of academic freedom, or based on considerations that violated constitutionally-protected rights and freedoms

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the President may refer the complaint to either of two faculty committees determined through processes established by the University Senate

- (1) The Advisory Committee on Faculty Continuance, Promotion, and Tenure – for preliminary inquiry, consultation, and reasoned advice and recommendation; will seek to settle the matter within three weeks by preliminary inquiry, consultation, discussion, and confidential mediation
- (2) An Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Continuance, Promotion, and Tenure – to conduct a formal evidentiary hearing; at the conclusion of the hearing, the Committee must accept or reject the complaint, and make a written recommendation to the President

The President may accept, reject, or revise the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, and transmit his/her recommendation to the Board of Regents for final action

Some Friendly Advice

The goal of the department, college, and university is for you to be successful, content, and to make a long-term commitment to WKU

Familiarize yourself early on with the departmental, college, and university guidelines and standards, and consult with your department head and more senior faculty

Assemble materials in real time, and add to your packet over time

Remember that the path to promotion and/or tenure is a developmental one – chart a course that enables you to grow as a professional in all aspects of your role, and in turn have a greater impact on behalf of your department, college, and the university

Organize your packet to tell your professional story, and how all the pieces fit together

Consider electronic submission of materials

References

Faculty Handbook Archive

https://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/resources/faculty_handbook.php

WKU Policies Website

<https://www.wku.edu/policies/>

WKU Policy 1.124V: Extension of the Probationary Period

<http://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/24.pdf>

WKU Policy 1.196V: Research-Track Faculty

<http://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/220.pdf>

WKU Policy 1.198V: Clinical Faculty

<http://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/29.pdf>

WKU Policy 1.199V: Pedagogical Track Faculty

<http://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/30.pdf>