

**Guidance on Faculty Evaluation Process as a Result of Pandemic**

This document will guide evaluators assessing the performance of faculty for any period that includes the Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 semesters and any part of the 2020-2021 academic year. This guidance provides some special considerations to counteract the potentially significant negative effect of the pandemic on faculty work. Faculty should have been provided access to a special form for documenting these effects. Submission of the form was voluntary on the part of the faculty member. It is available on the Provost’s website under “[Faculty Resources](https://www.uab.edu/faculty/resources).”

As a general matter, UAB remains committed to recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching, research and creative activities, and service. However, we must also be flexible and must recognize the human toll that the pandemic has taken on all of us including on the productivity of some faculty. Given the heterogeneity among the faculty and their personal circumstances it is expected that the pandemic has had different effects on different members of the faculty. With that in mind, evaluators should be cautious about comparing two faculty members, whether expressly or not. Please strive to evaluate each faculty member on their own merits in the context of the challenges they encountered during the pandemic.

UAB has already taken a number of steps to ameliorate the effects of the pandemic on faculty. We granted an automatic extension to the tenure clock for all tenure track faculty members. As described below, we made the use of IDEA evaluations optional for faculty. We introduced new teaching modalities that allowed greater use of remote teaching. We created an extended period of no on-campus teaching beginning November 20, 2020 and ending January 20, 2021. We have provided below some additional considerations.

**Teaching Evaluations**

Starting in the second half of the Spring 2020 semester, faculty had to quickly adjust to new teaching modalities. This period of adjustment to new course formats and classroom technology continued over the summer and has continued into the current 2020-2021 academic year. The Provost felt that student IDEA evaluations of faculty adjusting to, in some cases, new methods of teaching, would be adversely affected. Consequently, the Provost gave all faculty the option of not having their IDEA evaluations for Spring and Summer 2020 and for the 2020-2021 academic year used in annual performance reviews or in P&T reviews. Chairs and other unit leaders still have access to these evaluations and may use them for developmental purposes or to identify trends in the student experience during this unprecedented time. However, in order to prevent P&T committees and other P&T evaluators from being influenced by these evaluations, chairs and other unit leaders should **not** distribute or otherwise make available to P&T evaluators the evaluations for this period or discuss them with these evaluators unless the faculty member opts to make them available.

Regardless of whether or not a faculty member has opted out of using IDEA evaluations, they should never be used as the sole basis for evaluating teaching. If faculty members opt not to use IDEA evaluations, they will need to demonstrate their excellence in teaching in a variety of other ways. These might include written evaluations or other measures suggested in the pandemic impact form, including training and other professional development efforts to learn the technology and pedagogy of high quality remote and hybrid learning.

In addition, as is always the case, evaluators may look for other evidence of teaching effectiveness not necessarily directly provided by the faculty member, such as in-person peer and chair evaluations of instructional performance; assessments of student learning outcomes (often required by accreditors); and student advising evaluations. If instructors provide particular evidence of teaching effectiveness (including that suggested in the pandemic impact form), evaluators should take that evidence into account. Evaluators may also look at course content (including syllabus design, exams and other modes of assessment, materials provided in Canvas, success rates (such as DFW rates) of students taught, and actual use of the Center for Teaching and Learning by a faculty member (faculty registrations for CTL workshops are searchable on the CTL website). To the extent that faculty have been given specific guidance about any of the foregoing in a particular unit, then compliance with that guidance should be considered as well.

**Research and Creative Activities**

Research and creative activities remain key pillars of UAB’s strategy, notwithstanding the pandemic. Faculty members should be supported and encouraged to continue their engagement with these activities. At the same time, we expect that productivity may have been, and perhaps continue to be, disrupted or adversely affected, and we understand that some faculty may disclose personal circumstances that further limit their progress. Therefore, it may be necessary to apply a different standard when assessing faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity in Spring and Summer 2020 and AY 2020-21. Recognizing the cascading effects of disruptions to faculty efforts, departments and other academic units should exercise flexibility in evaluating faculty research in the coming year or two, depending on the extent and type of disruption experienced and documented by each faculty member.

The change in UAB’s operational status, beginning in March 2020, has likely resulted in disruptions of research, including research involving animal models, human subjects, and clinical protocols. UAB’s COVID-19 Operational Color System enforced restrictions in the number, supervision and training, and spacing of personnel in laboratories, as well as in the conduct of human subject research. Researchers had to document their plans to comply with such restrictions in their Resumption of Research Operations (R2Ops). It is safe to assume that research productivity was adversely affected by restrictions in operational status and that these circumstances were beyond the control of the faculty member. The impact extended to external collaborative projects as well as to conference presentations and a slowing of the review process of professional journals. The cessation of public performances and exhibitions in the arts also placed restrictions on faculty in the arts. As a general matter when considering research and creative performance by a faculty member, it should be noted that the shift to new teaching modalities might have created a *de facto* redistribution of effort toward teaching and away from research and service. Evaluators should, where appropriate, consider allowing some greater emphasis in performance evaluations based on teaching effort, and a corresponding decrease in research and/or service, without penalizing research or service performance evaluations. Of course, this should be discussed with the faculty member being evaluated.

Departments may consider recalibrating their research/scholarship/creative expectations and criteria for 2020 and AY 2020-21. Consider placing more emphasis on quality as opposed to quantity. For example, if a department typically expects pre-tenure faculty members to publish a given number of papers per year, the faculty evaluation committee could adjust that expectation, particularly if the work is in a high impact publication and the faculty member had a significant role in its creation. Committees may assign greater value than they normally would to conference papers accepted but not delivered because of conference cancellations. Virtual presentations given as part of academic conferences could appropriately be evaluated as equivalent to in-person presentations. Particularly with P&T decisions, remember that the future trajectory of a faculty member’s career is at least as important as whether or not traditional benchmarks have already been met. As a result, evaluators might place more emphasis than usual on submitted applications for external and internal funding of their research and scholarly activities. The trajectory may be best calibrated based on pre-pandemic performance, without placing undue emphasis on any period after March 1, 2020.

**Service**

Pandemic-related changes to internal and external service commitments will vary. Faculty members may find that their service activities have shifted, with some areas of service increasing while others have decreased. For example, there might have been fewer search committees to serve on, but there also might have been more peer-to-peer mentoring. Some faculty made significant contributions to the many committees involved in UAB’s response to the pandemic and to the logistics of returning to different levels of operational status. In evaluating service, consider giving special weight to contributions that advance unit-wide teaching and learning during this period, and to service efforts utilizing the faculty member’s expertise that support UAB’s own and the community’s responses to the pandemic (such as service on internal task forces and volunteering at vaccine sites). As with research and creative activities, when evaluating service during this period, committees and unit leaders are urged to give greater weight to the quality and impact of the service work instead of the amount of service provided.