
Academic Staff Probationary Review Policy

Department Policy Number

050 004

Effective Date

Revised November 1, 1994
Revised May 2002

Purpose

This policy outlines the probationary review process for AUFA academic staff members.

Definitions

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| Agreement | Terms and Conditions of Agreement Between The Governors of Athabasca University (the Board) and Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA). |
| Section(s) | Section(s) referenced from the Agreement. |
| Committee | Academic Tenure Review Committee. |
| Confidential Personal File | The staff member's permanent confidential file, maintained in Human Resources. |
| Temporary Personal File | A temporary file containing documents relating to the tenure review, maintained during the review and destroyed after the period of appeal. |

Policy

1.0. General

The following procedures are based on key processes contained in Section 3.2 of the Agreement. Where these procedures are inconsistent with the Agreement, the latter shall prevail. The Agreement provides for the following:



- 1.1 All regular academic appointments are subject to a probationary period, which is specified in the letter of offer and extends from the date of employment (Section 3.1.2). The President may waive the probation period in accordance with Section 3.1.2 (b).
- 1.2 In accordance with Section 3.2.5, a Committee having a composition similar to that of the search committee recommending initial appointment shall review the probationary staff member's appointment and performance and make a recommendation in writing to the appropriate Executive Officer in accordance with the following:
 - a. Initial Probationary Period
Between nine (9) and four (4) months prior to the end of the staff member's probationary period. (Section 3.2.5 (a)).
 - b. Early Review
In exceptional cases, for the assistant professor level or below, a request for early review may be initiated by the staff member with the consent of the supervisor and forwarded to the appropriate Executive Officer anytime following the end of the twenty-fifth (25) month of the probationary period (Section 3.2.7).
 - c. Extended Probation
No later than four (4) months prior to the end of the term of an extended probationary period, a Tenure Review Committee shall review the appointment and performance and make a recommendation to the appropriate Executive Officer (Section 3.2.5 b).
- 1.3 The staff member shall be notified of the president's decision under Section 3.2.5 no later than three months prior to the end of the term of the probationary period (Section 3.2.6).

2.0 Criteria and Purpose

- 2.1 The conferring of tenure is likely to be the most important step in relations between the University and the faculty member. The matter should be decided only after careful discussion. The special authority of those within a discipline to judge competence should be recognized. A decision on tenure is basically an academic rather than an executive responsibility.
- 2.2 The essential criteria for probationary reviews are outlined in Sections 3.7 and 3.8 must be weighted according to the duties assigned. Since the review is based directly on job performance, it is the fundamental responsibility of the Committee to marshal and consider evidence of performance for the entire probationary period, or for the period of extended probation, if appropriate.
- 2.3 Probationary reviews are of utmost importance to the university since they affect the fundamental health of the institution. Probationary reviews consider the competence of the staff member to perform all tasks assigned based on the work completed during the probationary period.



3.0 Procedures and Responsibilities

3.1 The Human Resources Officer:

- a. shall advise the appropriate executive officer, the centre chair/supervisor and the staff member that a probationary review is due;
- b. shall advise the appropriate executive officer of the composition of the original search committee and shall discuss any concerns regarding Committee structure with the appropriate executive officer;
- c. shall ensure a Temporary Personal File containing relevant documentation is established and is available to the Committee, including:
 - i. a copy of the staff member's Confidential Personal File
 - ii. the staff member's current job description
 - iii. a copy of the original job advertisement
 - iv. the staff member's curriculum vitae
 - v. the staff member's written submission, if any
 - vi. up-to-date performance assessment;
- d. shall set up or assist the Chair to set up the Committee meetings;
- e. shall be collecting point for all information supplied to the Committee;
- f. shall be a non-voting member of the Committee;
- g. shall prepare the letters to referees and send them out according to the schedule set out by the Committee;
- h. shall make available to internal referees, for viewing in Human Resources, the original job advertisement, the staff member's current curriculum vitae and job description, and any written submission the probationary staff member may have made. And, shall make available to external referees Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of the Agreement, the job description and the staff member's current curriculum vitae. All other documentation is considered confidential;
- i. shall provide the staff member with a list of documents reviewed and persons solicited;
- j. shall ensure that the Committee's summary report, the appropriate executive officer's recommendation, the president's decision, and, in the event of an extension, the development plan are placed on the staff member's Confidential Personal File at the completion of the review;



- k. shall ensure that the contents of the Temporary Personal File are destroyed after the appeal period.

3.2 The Probationary Staff Member:

- a. may suggest, via the Human Resources Officer, the names of colleagues to be consulted on his/her behalf;
- b. shall submit an up-to-date curriculum vitae and shall verify that the job description provided is current;
- c. may make a written submission on his/her behalf;
- d. shall submit all documentation to the Human Resources Officer.

3.3 The Committee:

- a. shall hold an initial meeting to:
 - i. review the contents of the staff member's Temporary Personal File;
 - ii. solicit in confidence the written comments of at least five (5) Academic staff members who are familiar with or affected by the work of the candidate, at least three (3) of whom shall be from outside the department, and may solicit in confidence the written comments of other staff members or individuals external to the University who are familiar with or affected by the work of the probationary staff member. Committee members may also submit their individual written comments provided such comments are submitted prior to the internal and external solicitation process;

Subordinate support staff may request to make verbal comments to the committee in lieu of a written submission.

- b. shall give all referees requested to make comment a minimum of one (1) weeks' notice to prepare and submit such comments;
- c. shall hold a second meeting to review in confidence all written comments received and any additional information added to the Temporary Personal File;
- d. may interview any referee to clarify written comments submitted;
- e. When the committee interviews or receives verbal comments from a referee, the referee's comments shall be recorded in detail and signed by all members of the committee and the referee attesting to the accuracy of the record;
- f. may seek further comments from additional referees if it is, in the Committee's judgment, appropriate to do so;



- g. shall return any unsigned submissions (email responses are acceptable);
- h. may choose to meet with the probationary staff member to gain further clarification; may present in writing to the probationary staff member areas significant enough to affect the judgment of the Committee allowing at least one (1) week for the staff member to respond in writing or in person as he/she wishes;
- i. shall present its findings to the appropriate Executive Officer in the form of a written summary report with a copy to the Centre chair/supervisor. In this report the Committee must reflect carefully to make explicit what expectations it used to define levels of, or quality of performance on each set of tasks. For example, if the Committee decided that committee work was one category, how did it judge the quality and effectiveness of the work? Was this simply attendance or regular attendance, or facilitation of the committee's work, or contribution to the procedures and process that build a tradition of helpful service? If the Committee was concerned with teaching, what elements of teaching did it assess? How did the Committee gain reflective input from colleagues to the assessment? This summary report must include a recommendation with respect to the probationary period in accordance with Section 3.2.5 of the Agreement. If the recommendation is for extension of probation, the summary report shall specify the period of extension (maximum one year), the areas in which improvement is required and possible remedial actions needed;
- j. Each individual Committee member shall ensure that confidentiality is maintained, including committee discussions and recommendations.

3.4 The Appropriate Executive Officer

- a. shall strike the Committee ensuring it resembles the original search committee with a Chair and a Human Resources Officer;
- b. shall review the findings of the Committee, notify the staff member in writing of the nature of his/her recommendation to the President, (per Section 3.2.5) and provide a copy of the Committee's summary report to the staff member;
- c. If the recommendation is for extension of probation, the appropriate executive officer in conjunction with the Centre chair/supervisor shall prepare a development plan and discuss this with the staff member;
- d. Shall ensure a copy of the Committee's summary report, his/her recommendation to the President, and, in the case of extension, a copy of the development plan, are forwarded to Human Resources.

3.5 The President:

After reviewing the findings of the Committee and considering the recommendation of the appropriate executive officer, the President:



- a. shall formally notify the staff member regarding his/her decision with respect to the recommendation of the appropriate Executive Officer;
- b. shall ensure a copy of his/her decision, together with all other documentation, is forwarded to Human Resources.

4.0 Access to Temporary Personal File

- 4.1 All Committee members, Human Resources, the appropriate Executive Officer and the President have access to the staff member's Temporary Personal File.
- 4.2 The appellant and respondent and their respective representatives have access to the Temporary Personal File in the event of an appeal.

5.0 Appeal

- 5.1 A staff member has the right to appeal any recommendation regarding termination of his/her probation period (Section 9.5.1 b.).
- 5.2 The staff member shall provide the President with written notification within ten (10) working days of receipt of the decision.

Regulation

Procedure

Approved By

Executive Group, May 2002

Amended Date/Motion No.

Related References, Policies and Procedures

[080 009 - Procedural Guidelines for Appeals With Respect to Probation, Salaries, and Academic Promotion](#)

Applicable Legislation/Regulation

[AUFA/The Governors of Athabasca University \(the Board\) Terms and Conditions Agreement](#)
[Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)



Responsible Position/Department

This policy is maintained and administered by Human Resources. For further information, please contact the Human Resources Advisor or the Employment Services Advisor. Contact information is available on the Human Resources web-site at <http://www1.athabascau.ca/hr/>

Keywords