

AY24-10-F

Title of Issue (short descriptive title by which the issue may be referenced)

Modification of Annual Review of Full-Time Faculty in their 1st Year of Service to the Institution

Description of Issue

Overview of Current Policy

The current ODU Faculty Handbook requires all first-year faculty members to submit materials for their annual evaluation by December 16th of their first semester. This timeline necessitates that faculty submit evaluation materials after only 4.5 months of employment and 3.5 months of teaching, which provides limited opportunity for meaningful assessment of their performance.

Proposed Change

Faculty and administrators in the DCEPS propose that the requirement for first-year faculty to submit an evaluation in the fall semester of their first year be eliminated. Instead, we recommend that the first-year faculty evaluation process be replaced with an alternative approach:

- **Spring Semester Evaluation Meeting:** The faculty member would meet face-to-face with their Department Chair during the spring semester to discuss their progress in teaching, research, and service since starting their position. They should provide a list of articles published and grants submitted/funded for research, courses taught and student opinion surveys, and a list of service activities to the Chair in advance of the meeting.
- **Chair's Follow-Up Letter:** Following the meeting, the Department Chair would submit a letter to the Dean, summarizing the discussion and indicating the progress made by the faculty member throughout the first academic year. This letter would serve as the basis for the contract renewal for the following academic year.

Rationale for Submission

Rationale for the Proposed Change

1. **Insufficient Time for Meaningful Evaluation:** First-year faculty have limited time to establish themselves in their roles before the current December evaluation deadline. At this point, they have only been teaching for about 3.5 months, which is not enough time to gather meaningful data on their teaching effectiveness, meet annual scholarship expectations, or engage in significant service contributions. This results in evaluations that fail to reflect the true potential of the faculty member.
2. **Focus on Adjustment and Development:** The first semester for new faculty is typically focused on adjusting to their new roles, including navigating institutional expectations, getting acquainted with students, and developing initial research plans. Requiring them to submit evaluation materials so soon detracts from this critical period of transition. By postponing the formal evaluation process to the spring, faculty would have more time to demonstrate growth and make meaningful progress in their teaching, research, and

service.

3. Reduction in Administrative Burden: The current requirement for a formal evaluation so early in their tenure places a significant administrative burden on first-year faculty.

Preparing evaluation materials in their first semester pulls time and attention away from their primary responsibilities, particularly research and teaching. An alternative process, such as the proposed face-to-face meeting with the Department Chair, would reduce this burden and allow faculty to focus on establishing themselves academically.

4. Improved Faculty Retention and Satisfaction: Supporting first-year faculty through a more developmental, less formal evaluation process in their first year is likely to lead to higher faculty satisfaction and retention. Providing new faculty with constructive feedback through a meeting with the Chair allows for a more personalized, supportive evaluation process that can better address their unique challenges and needs in their first year at ODU.

5. Comprehensive and Timely Feedback: A spring semester meeting would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation, as the faculty member would have had an entire semester to teach, conduct research, and contribute to service. The Department Chair would have a clearer and more complete picture of the faculty member's strengths and areas for development. This would allow the Chair to provide more meaningful feedback, which could inform the faculty member's growth over the summer and into their second year.

Conclusion

In light of these considerations, faculty and administrators in the DCEPS request the following revision to the Faculty Handbook: Eliminate the requirement for first-year faculty to submit formal evaluation materials in the fall semester and replace it with a face-to-face evaluation meeting between the Department Chair and the faculty member in the spring semester, followed by a letter from the Chair to the Dean summarizing the faculty member's progress throughout the first academic year. This revised policy will provide a more accurate, supportive, and developmentally appropriate evaluation process for first-year faculty while allowing them to focus on their core responsibilities during their first months at ODU.

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