

C. Launching the Tenure Review

From the Faculty Handbook: “Permission to initiate a review for tenure must be obtained from the dean, because it commits the college or school to long-term support of the position. When a review for promotion to tenure is conducted, it is required to be thorough and well-documented, since the decision that is made is of far-reaching importance both to the individual and to the university.”

[Timing](#) (Faculty Handbook)

[Appealing the decision not to initiate a review](#) (Faculty Handbook)

[What the Colleges Say](#)

C1. When is a tenure review normally initiated?

The standard tenure clock at Cornell is six years (except for the Johnson Graduate School of Management, which observes an eight-year clock). Under the six-year clock, the tenure process typically commences with the assembly of a tenure dossier at the end of the fifth year or the beginning of the sixth year. The launch of a tenure review requires Dean approval.

C2. What about staging an early review?

There are a number of circumstances that can prompt a discussion of the normal timelines. The candidate may have an exceptional record and may be actively sought out by other institutions; retention may hinge on the unit being flexible about an early review. Without making any promises, this should be communicated to the candidate with the usual caveat that early promotion typically invites heightened scrutiny during the review process. Specifically, there is no “discounting” of the expectations for tenure simply because the review is early – the candidate must satisfy the same expectations as would be required if the review occurred in the normal time frame. Therefore, an early launch of the review needs to be carefully considered.

C3. What about delaying the review?

According to university bylaws, a faculty member may not hold the position of assistant professor for more than the equivalent of six years of full-time service (eight years in the Johnson Graduate School of Management), unless, in the judgment of the provost, a temporary extension is warranted. Tenure clock extensions are available only in limited circumstances, including family and medical leaves, Cornell Academic Parental Leave (see [Policy 6.2.1](#), Leaves for Professors and Academic Staff, page 39), some forms of government or public service leaves, and situations where there have been substantial impediments to progress that were not in the faculty member’s control. Clock extensions are not available if the sole basis of the request is that the candidate has not made sufficient progress towards tenure. The dean may request provost approval for tenure clock extensions through the Academic Human Resources Office.

C4. What about discouraging or denying a review?

If they are properly executed, then the collection of annual reviews including the one just prior to the tenure review launch should provide the candidate with some information about the chance for promotion. However, it should always be remembered that the pool of external review letters may lead

to an upwards revision of tenured faculty thinking about the candidate's research. Thus, when talking to the candidate about "chances" the chair must careful not to communicate a level of pessimism that is unsubstantiated. It is expected that the chair will consult with the tenured faculty prior to having the pre-launch discussion with the candidate.

It should be noted that the Dean has the authority to deny a review for reasons other than merit. This decision can be [appealed](#) by the candidate.

Candidate-Supplied Documents

Candidates are in charge of certain aspects of the dossier, typically the CV, the research statement, the teaching statement, a list of possible external reviewers, and a no-contact list. The candidate should work hard to make it easy for the reader to assess their accomplishments. A well-organized website with carefully chosen links can be very useful. It is a good idea to be aware of the [FACTA Dossier Checklist](#) at the very start of the review process. [What the Colleges have to say about the candidate's statements and CV.](#)

C5. What should the CV include?

The candidate should approach the CV content and format decisions in consultation with their Chair and mentor. Obvious for consideration are (a) academic degrees and dates, (b) previous academic appointments, (c) publications suitably classified, (d) funded grant proposals, (e) presentations and talks, (f) awards, (g) courses taught by semester including enrollments, and (h) students formally supervised in a research or project capacity (undergraduate, masters, doctoral).

C6. What are some guidelines for writing a good research statement?

The basic idea is to write in plain English and show that your work has direction and that you have thought about its connection to the "big picture" in your field. That is, you should:

1. Write for the general academic reader rather than simply the experts in your precise field.
2. Highlight your most important work and its connection to the major research themes in your field.
3. Tell a story that reveals a positive trajectory and which makes "future plans" plausible.

Sometimes there is merit in discussing unfunded proposals.

C7. What are the attributes of a good teaching statement?

As appropriate, the teaching statement should discuss:

1. Teaching philosophy.
2. Modifications made to existing courses.
3. New courses developed and the rationale for developing them.
4. Approaches to graduate student seminars.

5. Expository/outreach writings.
6. Management of teaching assistants, when applicable.

C8. What are the attributes of a good extension statement?

As appropriate, the extension statement should discuss

1. Goals, accomplishments, and methodology.
2. Specific types of activities including in-service education.
3. Extension-related publications and other examples of scholarship.
4. Unique and creative aspects of the extension program.
5. Administrative and leadership responsibilities that relate to the extension effort.

C9. How should service and external engagement contributions be documented?

Service divides neatly into campus-related activity and professional society activity. The following should be documented

1. Committee participation at the department, college, and university level.
2. Participation within a professional society.

Community-engagement that relates to the candidate's research, teaching, or extension work should be mentioned in the CV and more thoroughly documented in the research statement, teaching statement or extension statement as appropriate.

C10. How should a commitment to diversity and inclusion be expressed?

Candidates should use (as appropriate) their statements on research, teaching/extension, and service to describe activities and accomplishments that reflect a commitment to diversity and inclusion. The [Office of Faculty Development and Diversity](#) has assembled a list of sample activities that is available through this [advice webpage](#) that is provided to faculty candidates. Note that applicants for faculty positions are required to submit a [Statement on Contributions to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). Alternatively, the candidate should be allowed to include in the dossier a free standing statement on diversity and inclusion if they think that is the best way to communicate their accomplishments.

C11. What are the rules about updating the various documents that are supplied by the candidate?

For the sake of portraying the "same candidate" to all who participate in the review, the dossier is considered closed at the start of the tenure process. For these purposes, file closure occurs at the point of engagement with the external reviewers. The file can be updated during the process but only for the purposes of adding information that corroborates the quality of the work already reflected in the file: e.g., the acceptance of a submitted manuscript, the award of a submitted grant application, etc. The file cannot be updated to include new work completed after the closure date.