




**To:** Deans, Department Heads, Chairs and School Directors, and  
College and Department Promotion and Tenure Committee Chairs

**From:** Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs 

**Cc:** Provost, President of the Faculty Senate, Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs,  
College HR Division Directors

**Date:** September 6, 2023

**Subject:** **Summary of Substantive Changes to Chapter 3 of the 2023-24 Faculty Handbook**

1. **Purpose.** This memo summarizes some key changes to the promotion and tenure (P&T) process in Chapter 3 of the 2023-2024 Faculty Handbook. The 2023-24 Handbook will soon be posted to the Provost Office [website](#).
2. **Background.** In the fall of 2018, an extensive revision of the promotion and tenure section (3.4) of the Faculty Handbook was undertaken. Most of the revisions were editorial and were intended to improve the clarity and readability of the Handbook.  
  
These revisions proceeded through university governance and culminated in approval by the Board of Visitors in March 2021. However, full implementation was delayed so that academic units had sufficient time to update their promotion and tenure expectations documents and particularly to give departmental faculty sufficient time to review and to approve them.  
  
The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors approved the 2023-24 Faculty Handbook on August 29, 2023. The new Handbook now includes the 2021 changes, as well as additional revisions that were approved more recently.
3. **Substantive Changes to the P&T Process.** The 2023-24 Handbook contains the following substantive changes to the promotion and tenure process.
  - a. *Requirement for Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Expectations.* Section 3.4 of the 2023-24 Faculty Handbook now specifies that each department/school and/or college will maintain promotion and tenure guidelines describing procedures and expectations for reappointment, progress toward promotion and/or tenure, and the evaluation of promotion and/or tenure cases. For example, section 3.4, Promotion and Tenure, reads in part:

*Each department/school will maintain promotion and/or tenure guidelines in a document that follows the university template and includes departmental procedures and expectations for reappointment, progress toward promotion and/or tenure, and the evaluation of promotion and/or tenure cases. .... If a college adopts guidelines that establish a collegewide standard for promotion and/or tenure, with the dean's approval, departments may maintain a set of guidelines that interpret the college-wide standard within the context of the department's disciplines and traditions. All guidelines will be approved by the faculty (through department- and/or college-level governance), the college-level committee and the dean, and the provost's office, and will be made available online.*

Nearly all departments, schools, and colleges have submitted their documents to the Office of the Provost and Faculty Affairs is in the process of evaluating and endorsing them.

- b. *Utilization of the Expectations in Evaluating Candidates.* The 2023-24 Faculty Handbook explicitly requires the evaluation of candidates to be linked to the department, school and/or college expectations. For example, section 3.4.4, General Expectations for Promotion and Tenure, reads in part:

*Each department or school (or college, when college-wide guidelines are applied) is required to have “Expectations Guidelines for Promotion and/or Tenure.” .... Expectations must be adhered to at every stage of the promotion and/or tenure process.*

Also, for example, in section 3.4.4.1, Departmental Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure:

*After evaluating each candidate’s dossier based on criteria established in the department’s promotion and/or tenure “Expectations Guidelines” the committee votes and writes a recommendation letter for each candidate...*

- c. *Notification of Candidates.* Section 3.4.4.4, Candidate Notification, of the 2023-24 Faculty Handbook now requires candidates to be notified of either a positive or negative outcome at each step in the promotion and/or tenure process. The section reads in part,

*At each level of review in the process, the candidate must be notified of the result of the review, whether positive or negative. The department head, chair, or school director notifies the candidate of the result of the departmental review, and the dean notifies the candidate of the result of the college level review. Notifications will only indicate whether the candidate’s case moved on to the next level of review or not; they will not include the results of votes, the names of external evaluators, statements from evaluations, or excerpts from committee or administrative letters.*

Candidate notification of a positive outcome should be kept short and to the point, for example:

Dear Dr. Smith,

In accordance with Faculty Handbook section 3.4.4.4, Candidate Notification, the department/school/college has completed its review of your promotion and/or tenure dossier and has forwarded it to the college/university for their review.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jones

See the Faculty Handbook if a negative outcome must be communicated, where such a communication must “include all substantive reasons for that recommendation, including references to the relevant department and/or college promotion and/or tenure expectations guidelines” as well as options for appeal if relevant.

4. **Reminder: “Two-Bites Rule.”** As a reminder, continuing a change that was first introduced in the 2022-23 Faculty Handbook, the 2023-24 Handbook only allows candidates to be considered twice for tenure:

*Faculty members may only be evaluated two times for promotion and tenure or continued appointment. The two evaluations may each be in a non-mandatory year, but in the case of a second non-mandatory negative decision, the faculty member will not be allowed a third evaluation. If the second evaluation results in a negative decision, a one-year terminal appointment is offered.*