

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Fall 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fixed-Term Faculty, Deans, School Directors, and Chairpersons

FROM: Laura Lee McIntyre, Ph.D., Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



SUBJECT: Guiding Policies on Fixed-Term Faculty Review and Promotion

In April 2025, Teresa Mastin, Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs (FASA), announced several meaningful enhancements to the fixed-term faculty promotion process, designed to better reflect our fixed-term faculty's work and contributions and to provide greater clarity and consistency across the university. These improvements were developed in close partnership with a dedicated working group comprised primarily of fixed-term faculty. Throughout the development process, FASA engaged with key stakeholder groups, including the University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA), the Council of Faculty Affairs Deans, and the Council of Deans.

What's New



Office of the Provost

Hannah Administration
Building
Michigan State University
426 Auditorium Road
Suite 430
East Lansing, MI 48824

517-432-6550
Fax: 517-432-9601
provost.msu.edu

1. **A new promotion form**, the [Form on Progress and Excellence](#), was designed specifically for fixed-term faculty. The form is available for promotions from instructor to senior instructor, assistant to associate professor, or associate to full professor. Please note that health programs (HP) faculty will continue to use their current form, designed specifically for their work.
2. **A university-wide timeline** that starts in September with this letter. In October, colleges submit names of those going up for promotion to MSU Human Resources. Materials are then due to Human Resources in May – bringing clarity and consistency to the process.
3. **New guidelines** were developed in collaboration with faculty to support units as they enhance their practices and faculty as they navigate promotion.

While the [Fixed-Term Promotion Policy](#) itself remains unchanged, these new elements offer a more structured and transparent framework to guide fixed-term faculty and colleges through the promotion process. The guidelines are intended to help inform and inspire college-level practices – they are not mandatory. However, the timeline, dossier contents/order, and new promotion form are required components of the university's process.

Core Values and Institutional Alignment

Fixed-term faculty are essential to advancing MSU's mission. Through their work in teaching, advising, curriculum development, outreach, research, and service, they make distinct and meaningful contributions to the academic experience that we seek to make visible. As such, the processes for promotion must reflect care, transparency, and excellence of the same kinds that underpin review processes for our tenure-system faculty and academic specialists.

Fixed-term promotion reviews should be grounded in the core institutional values of collaboration, excellence, equity, integrity, and respect. These values must inform not only the review process itself, but also how we define and assess scholarly and professional contributions. Evaluations must be aligned with each fixed-term faculty member's assigned duties, as outlined in their official position description and their Form on Progress and Excellence, ensuring that assessment is fair, relevant, and role-specific.

Roles and titles may vary, but the academic workforce at MSU shares a common purpose: to create and apply knowledge, inspire and support students, and build meaningful connections between scholarship and real-world impact. We deeply value our fixed-term faculty for what they do and for who they are as collaborators, innovators, and community members within a constantly evolving academic environment.

Contextual Considerations for 2025

In the evolving landscape of higher education, establishing clear and equitable processes for promotion is crucial for supporting recruitment, retention, and academic excellence. The fixed-term promotion policy offers a structured pathway for career advancement, allowing all faculty to develop and receive recognition for their contributions while ensuring that MSU remains responsive to the changing needs of individual colleges. This year, the [FASA](#) revised the [Form on Progress and Excellence](#), creating a version specifically for fixed-term faculty, and provided [centralized process guidance for fixed-term faculty promotion](#).

While core criteria for review and promotion remain unchanged, the university affirms that faculty should be evaluated based on their assigned duties, the quality of their contributions, and the circumstances in which their work was conducted. As reflected in the Form on Progress and Excellence for fixed-term faculty, evaluation processes should focus on allowing and empowering faculty to describe their activities through specific, substantive descriptions of their work. This approach allows units to continue recognizing faculty contributions that align with and demonstrate commitment to the university's land-grant mission and strategic priorities while using language that focuses on measurable outcomes and concrete activities. The university remains steadfast in supporting all faculty in their efforts to create effective and rigorous academic communities.

This year, many faculty are facing a myriad of unique challenges, which we are taking seriously, engaging in conversations about how best to support faculty and help ensure a fair and thoughtful approach to review and promotion processes. As such, for the 2025-2026 Fixed-Term Promotion cohort, fixed-term faculty preparing dossiers will present accomplishments achieved during the review period, which may include work impacted by federal developments since January 2025. To inform both internal and external reviewers, faculty may create a work interruption impact statement to include in their promotion dossiers as a standalone document. In such statements, faculty may document a record of interruptions and challenges to the areas for which they are appointed. Candidates should also include a plan to address the challenges they have faced and whether mentor support would be helpful in their efforts. Inclusion of a work-interruption impact statement is optional; however, external and internal reviewers are expected to give unbiased consideration to interruptions noted in the impact statement and to seek guidance from their unit administrator if they have questions.

Philosophy on Review and Promotion of Fixed-Term Faculty

Fixed-term faculty are appointed to undertake vital responsibilities in a range of important academic areas that advance the mission of the land-grant institution, including teaching, curriculum development, academic advising, research/creative activity, and service/outreach. MSU's processes related to review and promotion of fixed-term faculty are described in the [Promotion of Fixed-Term Faculty](#) policy in the Faculty Handbook.

Promotion is not an endpoint but a milestone in an ongoing academic journey. Our approach requires regular review of the expectations and criteria that shape these decisions—ensuring that assessments are fair, transparent, aligned with institutional values, and, in the case of our fixed-term faculty with teaching appointments, conducted in accordance with the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) with the Union of Non-Tenure Track Faculty, if applicable. While we celebrate accomplishments that enhance the effectiveness, climate, and culture of the unit, college, university, and discipline, we also recognize that persistent or serious behaviors inconsistent with these values warrant institutional intervention. Promotion must never be used to shield conduct that undermines our shared mission. Rather, it must reflect both individual merit and the integrity of the academic environment in which it was earned.

This framework reinforces two core institutional responsibilities. First, the institution must clearly articulate its values and ensure those values are reflected in its policies. If we claim to value excellence, inclusion, accountability, and integrity, then our systems for assessing those values must be equally robust. Decisions about promotion should be grounded in these principles and applied consistently across the core functions of academic work.

Second, MSU must ensure that all faculty, academic staff, and academic leaders are meaningfully involved in mentoring, evaluating, and supporting one another. This includes a responsibility to carefully review evidence presented for promotion, and to do so with a mindset that encourages success—especially when emerging pedagogies, scholarship, or creative work push traditional boundaries.

Individual fixed-term faculty members also carry responsibilities within this process. Chief among these is a commitment to the highest standards of professional behavior. Each faculty member must foster a climate of respect, inclusion, and integrity, and take ownership of their actions, as reflected in the [Faculty Rights and Responsibilities](#) policy. Collegiality is not just a professional courtesy—it is a foundation for trust. Faculty must be willing to receive feedback, reflect critically, and support colleagues, particularly in addressing behaviors that undermine individual dignity or the academic environment. This shared responsibility—to hold ourselves and each other accountable—is essential to the health and future of the academy.

What follows is the annual framework sent to fixed-term faculty, deans, school directors, and department chairs. It is intended to support a culture of transparency and fairness in promotion decisions. Because these decisions are among the most consequential in the academic enterprise, clarity in expectations and procedures is essential.

Each year, colleges and relevant units will be asked to review this university-level guidance to ensure alignment with their own processes and policies. This document is also shared with the UCFA, who are invited to suggest revisions that reflect our evolving understanding of excellence and our shared commitment to advancing the academic mission of MSU.

Guiding Policies

Important note for 2025-26: In general, faculty submitting promotion materials using guidance in place before significant changes to compliance frameworks should be evaluated in accordance with the original guidance. Similarly, annual reviews should be conducted based on guidance in place for the period being evaluated. Going forward, units should continue to recognize **all** faculty contributions that align with and demonstrate commitment to the university's land-grant mission, institutional values, and strategic priorities in the context of the faculty member's assigned duties and while using language that focuses on measurable outcomes and concrete activities.

While diversity, equity, and inclusion statements will not be submitted going forward, individuals will be expected to describe their full range of work within their appointment categories, which includes activities that further the university's mission, values, and strategic priorities through a broad range of efforts. This may include but is not limited to advancements in inclusive pedagogy, performing cutting-edge scholarship in under-researched topics and subject groups, expanding access and opportunity for all, reviewing and revising practices to assure fairness for all, enhancing respectful dialogue to increase understanding across differences, and creating spaces and programs that affirm and uplift often unheard voices.

Section 1: Promotional Review

The major promotional review type under the Fixed-Term Faculty Appointment System is **promotion in rank**, which evaluates advancement in one of three pathways: promotions from instructor to senior instructor, assistant to associate professor, or associate to full professor. A recommendation for promotion should be based on several years of sustained outstanding achievements in the relevant areas of the faculty member's appointment percentages, which can include teaching, scholarship, service, and/or additional areas of effort as outlined in the faculty member's appointment letter, consistent with performance levels expected for promotion at peer universities. A reasonably long period in rank before promotion (usually six years or more) is typically necessary to provide a basis in actual performance to permit endorsement of the individual and to predict continuous, long-term, high-quality professional achievement and service.

Section 2: Expectations of Department Chairpersons, School Directors, and Deans¹

The first responsibility for chairpersons, school directors, or unit administrators is to ensure the development of a set of fair standards and evaluative criteria for use in making promotion recommendations. These standards must take into consideration peer evaluations that have established a fair set of questions regarding contributions to the field, contributions to the values of the Institution, and other supporting information. As a general rule, in making assessments, no single indicator should be used as the sole measure of excellence and/or productivity; rather, the goal should be that multiple elements be used in assessing excellence for each area of a faculty member's assignment.

¹ For those colleges not organized into departments and schools, the dean, as unit administrator, holds the responsibilities that are required of chairpersons and school directors in other colleges.

Unit administrators are responsible as individuals for the recommendations made to the dean. Deans independently review each recommendation for promotion, and in each case, they will focus primarily on how effectively the individual performs their assigned academic duties. They support or reject the recommendations of chairperson/directors and college review committees and independently make a recommendation to the Provost, considering unit, college, and University criteria. Bearing in mind the University's continuing objective of supporting an excellent faculty, the unit and college must ensure well-grounded, well-justified recommendations for promotion.

Section 3: Expectations of Unit and College Review Committees

Peer review is fundamental to the promotion process. Each unit is required to establish procedures so that its faculty can provide advice regarding recommendations for promotion to the unit administrator. Members of review committees are expected to make recommendations to the unit leader or dean based upon full and frank discussions about candidates that are confidential, respectful, and evidence-based. All share the responsibility of building a unit characterized by inclusive excellence.

There should be some minimal level of uniformity in how unit committees function. Thus, in addition to the dossier (Form on Progress and Excellence, CV, reflective essay) for each candidate, each case should include:

- Unit promotion bylaws and/or policies (where applicable);
- Information concerning the assigned duties and expectations for the faculty member, e.g., appointment letter, annual review letters since last promotion action, letter explaining why a promotion case was previously denied;
- Written reports from all unit peer review committees;
- External review letters, when required by unit and/or college bylaws;
- Unit-level promotion votes

Section 4: The Focus of the Office of the Provost's Review

The Office of the Provost reviews each recommendation, concentrating primarily on evidence of the individual's effectiveness in the performance of assigned academic duties. Within this context, faculty must demonstrate substantive and sustainable achievement in the areas identified in their appointment assignments. Assessment should take into account the quality of outcomes as well as their quantity; it should also acknowledge the creativity of faculty effort and its impact on students, on others the university serves, and on the field(s) in which the faculty member works. It is expected that multiple methods for assessing performance be used.

The university expects faculty to uphold the highest standards of behavior, foster a respectful learning and work environment for all individuals, and take personal responsibility for their actions, as outlined in the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities. In line with this commitment, the Provost may consider information regarding matters of faculty behavior when making final determinations.

Section 5: The Process and Timeline

Unit peer review committees make recommendations to the chairperson or school director. Chairpersons and directors then make unit-level recommendations, which are reviewed by the college peer review committee, which makes a recommendation to the dean. Deans make the college recommendation to the Provost by May 1 each year, per the timeline [provided in the guidance document](#). Only the faculty member can stop a reappointment or promotion case from moving forward to the next higher level of

review. A negative recommendation by the chairperson, director, or dean does not eliminate the review at the Provost level. Recommendations are to be based on explicit unit and college criteria and quality evaluations that are consistent with unit, college, and university policies and goals.

The Office of the Provost reviews occur in May and June each year. Faculty are to be notified of recommendations from their chairperson/director/unit administrator or dean as soon as possible after those recommendations are forwarded to the next level for review. Deans will be notified of the final decision for promotion actions on July 1 or shortly thereafter. Official notice of final decisions will be sent to faculty members in July.

Conclusion

Our fixed-term faculty are deeply committed professionals whose expertise enriches every corner of the university. I ask each of you to approach the fixed-term promotion process with the same care and seriousness as we apply to our other promotional reviews. In doing so, we honor our institutional values and continue to foster an environment where all faculty and academic staff can thrive.

Thank you for your continued leadership.