



Policies and Procedures for Review and Promotion of Continuing System Academic Specialists

INTRODUCTION

Academic specialists are appointed to undertake responsibilities in a [range of functional areas](#) including teaching, curriculum development, academic advising, research, and service/outreach. Michigan State University policies and procedures related to appointment, review, and promotion of academic specialists are described in the [Academic Specialist Handbook](#). Academic specialists may be appointed on a fixed term basis or in the continuing system. Continuing system appointments are expected to be associated with a continuing, on-going need and set of responsibilities in the unit making the appointment. Positions funded by grants and contracts are not normally eligible for inclusion in the continuing system. Because the responsibilities of academic specialists vary widely, each position must have an individualized written job description associated with it. In some cases, individuals may have responsibilities related to more than one area of responsibility. In these cases, performance in all assigned areas is evaluated. This document describes NatSci policies and procedures for continuing system appointments.

TIMELINE

January 3	Units inform NatSci dean's office of candidates for senior specialist and specialists who plan to waive the automatic COVID-19 extension
January 15	Units inform NatSci dean's office of external referee suggestions and rationale for candidates for continuing status and senior specialist
March 15	Reappointment/promotion materials and recommendations due to NatSci dean's office (from unit)
May 1	Final packets due to FASA

REVIEWS AND REVIEW COMMITTEES

Annual Review:

All academic specialists must be reviewed annually by the appointing unit (department or program) using procedures defined by the unit. Summaries of these annual reviews must be in writing, a copy of which must be provided to the individual being reviewed, and each individual must be given the opportunity to attach a written response that will be kept on file as part of the review. Note that during the annual review is a good time to review and update the [Specialist Position Description](#) (start with the most recent form on file in your office). Often the description of duties and percentages categorized as teaching, curriculum development, advising, research, and outreach have changed over time. Having the description up to date is important during review of continuing specialists for reappointment for the second three years or to continuing appointment.

All academic specialists must maintain an on-going position portfolio that documents their activities and contributions. For individuals engaged in teaching, this should be a standard teaching portfolio¹. For others, it should contain analogous materials recording their professional development and documenting the contributions they have made to their unit, the college, the university, and their disciplinary field beyond the university.

For specialists engaged in teaching, peer evaluations of teaching should be annual during at least the first two years of their service as an MSU instructor, and they should continue to be annual as long as the department has any concerns about the instructor's teaching. A peer evaluation should also be performed in the year before the reappointment or promotion. Peer evaluations of all senior teaching specialists should be performed periodically, in order to recognize excellence and to ensure that departments remain broadly aware of their own teaching practices. The time period between peer evaluations will depend on departmental resources but the period should not exceed five years.

Reappointment and Promotion Reviews:

In the normal circumstances, continuing system academic specialists are reviewed for reappointment in their second year after initial appointment and for the granting of continuing status in their fifth year. Review for promotion to senior academic specialist has no fixed schedule.

Each unit must establish its own procedures for reviewing academic specialists for reappointment, granting of continuing status, and promotion to senior academic specialist.

At the college level, review of recommendations from units is undertaken by a committee composed of two members of the college administrative staff and faculty or academic specialists in the college (or other MSU colleges if specialized understanding of the candidate's contributions is needed). The committee applies the criteria outlined in this

¹ See [NatSci Teaching Evaluation Guidelines](#) for a description of the teaching portfolio.

document, as appropriate for the functional areas of the individuals under review and makes a recommendation to the NatSci Dean.

CRITERIA FOR REAPPOINTMENT, CONTINUING STATUS AND PROMOTION

In general, reappointment after the first probationary period is granted based on demonstrated satisfactory performance and demonstrated growth towards meeting the criteria for granting of continuing status. Granting of continuing status is based on demonstrated on-going outstanding performance of the responsibilities assigned to the position, and a demonstrated and growing capacity for broader leadership within and outside the university. Promotion to senior academic specialist is not common (as described in the MSU Academic Specialist Handbook) and is based on demonstrated outstanding performance of the assigned responsibilities and demonstrated outstanding leadership, and **high impact within and outside the university**. Time of service alone is not a qualification for promotion to senior specialist.

Aligned with the MSU and NatSci strategic plans, contributions to **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** in NatSci and the broader community will be considered in the evaluation process. DEI is integral to the excellence of the institution, and efforts to improve DEI will serve as one of the indicators of quality and excellence in the evaluation process. DEI efforts should be integrated throughout the Form on Progress and Excellence.

The following are the specific criteria for different types of specialist positions.

Teaching

Reappointment: High-quality and improving teaching as demonstrated by student evaluations (teaching evaluations must be collected for every class taught), in-class peer evaluation, and evaluation of the teaching portfolio, including evidence of student learning. Successful professional development related to teaching and higher education. Engagement with teaching and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status: Outstanding teaching as demonstrated by student evaluations (teaching evaluations must be collected for every class taught), in-class peer evaluation, and evaluation of the teaching portfolio, including evidence of student learning. Successful, growing engagement with and leadership related to broader teaching and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist: Continued outstanding teaching as demonstrated by student evaluations (teaching evaluations must be collected for every class taught), in-class peer evaluation, and evaluation of the teaching portfolio, including evidence of student learning. Outstanding leadership and impact related to teaching and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Advising

Reappointment: High-quality and improving student advising as demonstrated by evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and staff served by the advisor. Demonstrated understanding of university policies, procedures and curriculum as it relates to advisor's responsibilities. Successful professional development related to advising and higher education. Engagement in advising and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status: Outstanding student advising as demonstrated by evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and staff served by the advisor. Demonstrated understanding of university policies, procedures and curriculum as it relates to the advisor's responsibilities. Successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader advising and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist: Continued outstanding student advising as demonstrated by evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and staff served by the advisor. Demonstrated contributions to the evaluation and revision of department policies, procedures and curriculum. Outstanding leadership and impact related to broader advising and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Curriculum Development

Reappointment: High-quality and improving development of curricula and curricular materials as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the curricula, implementation of the curricula, and evidence of student learning. Professional development related to curriculum development and higher education. Engagement with broader curriculum development and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status: Outstanding development of curricula and curricular materials as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the curricula, implementation of the curricula, and evidence of student learning. Continuing engagement with professional development activities related to curriculum development and higher education. Successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader curriculum development and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist: Continued outstanding development of curricula and curricular materials as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the curricula, implementation of the curricula, and evidence of student learning. Outstanding leadership and impact related to broader curriculum development and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Service/Outreach

Reappointment: High-quality and improving engagement with and contributions to service and outreach activities as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the service or outreach activities assigned and impact on the clientele for the activities. Successful professional development related to service/outreach and higher education. Engagement with broader service/outreach and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status: Outstanding engagement with and contributions to service and outreach activities as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the service or outreach activities assigned and impact on the clientele for the activities. Continuing engagement with professional development activities related to service/outreach and higher education. Successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader service/outreach and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist: Continued outstanding engagement with and contributions to service and outreach activities as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the service or outreach activities assigned and impact on the clientele for the activities. Outstanding leadership and impact related to engagement with broader service/outreach and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Research

Reappointment: High-quality and improving performance of the research activities assigned, as demonstrated by publications, research grants, or written evaluation from the clientele of research services, as appropriate. Successful professional development related to the research activities of the position. Engagement with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status: Outstanding performance of the research activities assigned, as demonstrated by publications, research grants, or written evaluation from the clientele of research services, as appropriate. Continuing engagement with professional development related to the research activities of the position. Successful and growing engagement with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist: Continued outstanding performance of the research activities assigned, as demonstrated by publications, research grants, or written evaluation from the clientele of research services, as appropriate. Outstanding leadership and impact related to engagement with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues within the university and beyond.

Leadership and Administration

Occasionally, academic specialists are assigned responsibilities related to unit, college or university leadership or administrative activities. The nature and extent of these responsibilities should be specified explicitly in the individual's job description and should be annually evaluated based on appropriate criteria and as part of the processes related to reappointment, granting of continuing status, and promotion to senior specialist.

MATERIALS FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL EVALUATION

The materials provided by the unit to the college for reappointment, granting of continuing status, and promotion to senior specialist should include the Form on Progress and Excellence-Specialists as well as the additional materials requested below. A deep analysis of the contributions of the candidate based on the job description and criteria above and undertaken by a knowledgeable group is required. The analysis must include an evaluation of the evidence on progress and excellence provided by the candidate and should appear in the appropriate section(s) of the Form on Progress and Excellence.

Items must be submitted as one pdf in the following order:

1. Form on Progress and Excellence-Specialists
 - Cover/Signature Page
 - #1 Summary statement (by chair/director) justifying the change of status or promotion and describing the future trajectory of the candidate (if attachment, type "see attached" and add behind Summary Statements)
 - #3 Up-to-date [Specialist Position Description](#), item 3 (add after #45)
 - #4 - #45 Add information as appropriate. If an attachment(s) is necessary, indicate that there is an attachment and add it after #45. If an item is not applicable to the candidate, indicate N/A.
2. Candidate statement (no more than 5 pages) describing their contributions, future plans, and trajectory.
3. Candidate's CV
4. A description of the qualifications of external and internal referees (N/A for reappointments).
5. Letters of evaluation
 - For **reappointment**: no letters required.
 - For **granting of continuing status**: a minimum of three letters of evaluation from outside the unit with at least one being outside of the College of Natural Science.
 - For **promotion to senior academic specialist**: a minimum of four letters of evaluation with at least two of the letters to come from outside the university with at least one being peer review. No more than one letter can be from inside the unit.
 - All letters must be from appropriate individuals chosen by the unit and anonymous to the candidate. These individuals must be directly

knowledgeable about and qualified to comment on the candidate's contributions.

- In the case of research specialists being promoted to continuing status and for any specialist being promoted to senior status, the chair/director responsible for the promotion process will consult with the NatSci Dean's Office regarding the letters that should be submitted. A list of suggested referees with a rationale (a couple of sentences) for why each are in a position to evaluate the candidate must be sent to NatSci (natsci.rpt@msu.edu) by January 15.
6. Copies of the 3 most recent annual evaluations of the candidate.

Reviewed by the NatSci Faculty Advisory Council: 2/12/15

Minor clarification changes: 6/13/16

Minor clarification changes: 6/1/18

Due dates updated: 1/30/21

Clarifications, due dates: 11/30/22