

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 1	Units inform NatSci dean's office of candidates for senior specialist
January 15	Units forward external referee suggestions and rationale for 1) candidates for continuing status of research specialist and 2) all candidates for senior specialist to NatSci dean's office
March 1	Reappointment/promotion materials and recommendations due to NatSci dean's office (from unit)
April 1	Reappointment/promotion materials and recommendations due to Academic Human Resources (from dean's office)

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.

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.

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

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 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.

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 Form C as well as the additional materials requested below. As part of Form C, required information includes:

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1. A summary statement by the department chair or program director justifying the change of status or promotion and describing the future trajectory of the candidate in Form C, item 1.
2. Copy of up-to-date Specialist Position Description for Form C, item 3
3. A deep analysis of the contributions of the candidate based on the job description and criteria above and undertaken by a knowledgeable individual or group. This analysis must include an evaluation of the position portfolio (see page 2) provided by the candidate and should appear in the appropriate section(s) of Form C:
 - a. Academic advising in Form C, item 7
 - b. Teaching in Form C, item 12
 - c. Curriculum planning in Form C, item 14
 - d. Research in Form C, item 19
 - e. Outreach in Form C, item 21
 - f. Administration in Form C, item 23

In addition, the following materials are also required:

1. A statement by the candidate (no more than three pages) describing their contributions, future plans, and trajectory.
2. Letters of Review
 - a. For **reappointment**: no letters required.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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 with Form C. 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
(natscidean@msu.edu) by January 15.

3. A description of the qualifications of the external and internal referees.
4. The candidate's curriculum vitae.
5. Copies of the three most recent annual evaluations of the candidate.

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