

GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE THE SUCCESS OF FIXED-TERM FACULTY AT UNC-CHAPEL HILL

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The charge of the Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty (FTF) at UNC-Chapel Hill is to address concerns and make policy recommendations on matters specific to fixed-term faculty members, including, but not limited to, working conditions, status, and professional advancement. The Committee on Fixed-Term Faculty consists of nine members of the voting faculty appointed by the chair of the faculty. Seven of the members are fixed-term faculty, and two are tenured faculty. The numbers of fixed-term faculty on campus varies by department; however, over the last 20 years, there has been an increase of fixed-term faculty members on this campus from 40% to 60% of all faculty.

This document serves as an update to the 2015 “Recommended Best Practices Related to Fixed-Term Faculty,” which was supported by the Provost’s Office. In 2020, the FTF Committee reached out to fixed-term faculty to learn more about current concerns and needs which informed this revision. The goal of these revised guidelines is to try to address current variations in FTF practices across schools and serve as a compendium of information for Deans and Academic Associate Deans to make decisions related to fixed term faculty members in their respective schools and divisions.

Guidelines to Promote the Success of Fixed-Term Faculty

1. ELIMINATE MODIFIERS THAT PRECEDE FIXED-TERM FACULTY RANKS

The Task Force on Promotion and Tenure Policies & Practices (2020) at UNC Chapel Hill supports reducing the social distance between tenure track and fixed-term faculty members in order to cultivate a more egalitarian and respectful community of faculty members at UNC Chapel Hill. Fixed-term faculty are key contributors to the University's teaching mission and contribute in other meaningful ways that enable the University to succeed. Consequently, we recommend that units eliminate the modifiers that precede fixed-term faculty ranks for all positions designated at clinical, teaching, or research. This practice has already been adopted by a number of units on campus (e.g., Gillings School of Global Public Health, School of Nursing, School of Medicine....). Although we recommend dropping modifiers in title, we acknowledge that they will still be used for administrative purposes.

Examples:

- A Clinical Instructor (often used in health profession schools) is an **Instructor**.
- A Teaching Assistant Professor (often used in College or Arts & Sciences) is an **Assistant Professor**.
- A Research Associate Professor is an **Associate Professor**.

2. ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION AND REAPPOINTMENT

Standards and criteria for reappointment and progression in rank as well as the process for reappointment should be clearly defined and described in the school's policies and faculty should have access to it within each school. The department leadership should communicate deadlines for submitting a petition for reappointment and promotion (if applicable). At the point of inception, a clear career ladder system should be in place in each department. Individuals under consideration for reappointment will be given an opportunity to prepare dossiers and make a case for their continued participation in the appointing unit's academic program (Task Force on Promotion and Tenure Policies & Practices, 2020). Departmental or unit budgetary considerations should not be a factor in faculty's ability to seek promotion. Moreover, while faculty members are encouraged to communicate with their supervisors about seeking promotion, the ultimate decision to pursue review for promotion is with the faculty member.

3. CONSIDER MULTI-YEAR CONTRACTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Fixed term appointments range from one to five years. Faculty members who have successfully completed an initial appointment or have otherwise demonstrated their effectiveness and contribution to the various missions of their department may be offered renewable employment contracts ranging from one to five years in length, with every effort made to make contracts longer than one year whenever possible. Considerations for contract length include rank, contribution to department, and length of service.

Example 1: College of Arts & Sciences

- Assistant Professor 1-3 years
- Associate Professor 3 years
- Professor 5 years

Example 2: School of Nursing fixed term faculty typically have initial 1-year contracts for up to 3 years after hire followed by Assistant, Associate, and Professors being considered for contracts 3-5 years in length.

4. GIVE FIXED-TERM FACULTY AT LEAST 6 MONTHS' NOTICE OF NON-RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS

If the decision is made by a department not to renew the appointment of a fixed-term faculty member on a multi-year contract, they should be given notice at least six months prior to the end of the contract. Except in cases of urgent financial contingency, notice in advance of non-renewal should progressively increase to twelve months for fixed-term faculty with appointments of 3 years or more. Those on one-year contracts should be given at least 60-day notice.

When fixed-term faculty leave the university, regardless of the reason, an exit interview should be encouraged and data on the circumstances surrounding their departure should be reviewed by the managing supervisor and the dean of the respective school so data can be shared confidentially at the university level.

5. ESTABLISH A MENTORING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FIXED-TERM FACULTY IN EVERY DEPARTMENT

Fixed-term faculty members should be formally mentored as part of the Departmental Mentoring Program and should receive regular feedback (at minimum yearly) on their performance and provided the support necessary to advance their careers. Support should include, but not be limited to: access to training, competitive leaves, internal grants and awards, and travel funds. Fixed-term faculty should also have appropriate office/working space depending on their teaching assignments and should be considered a high priority for adequate office space based on the need for private office space (e.g., student advising and consultation, research activities).

6. INCLUDE FIXED-TERM FACULTY IN ALL ASPECTS OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

When they have met the criteria for faculty voting rights as specified in the *Faculty Code of University Government*, fixed-term faculty should be fully integrated into their departments and into departmental governance. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Participation in faculty meetings
- Voting privileges that include the opportunity to vote on all issues except personnel issues of tenure and promotion above the person's own rank.
- Inclusion in all routine departmental and university mailings
- Inclusion in curriculum discussions
- Consideration for leadership development opportunities and leadership within the department

7. CONDUCT BIENNIAL ASSESSMENTS OF SALARY COMPRESSION AND SALARY EQUITY AMONG FACULTY

Compensation should be fair and equitable compared with other faculty within the same department and compared with other, similar departments at the University. Salary for faculty should be reassessed at least biennially when considering salary compression and market value of faculty in industry and other academic settings. Salaries should be adjusted when necessary.