

# **Department of Plant and Soil Science**

## **Standards and Procedures for Continuing Appointment and Promotion of Non-tenure Research Faculty, Lecturers, and Professors of Practice**

**Date:** October 20, 2023 (Approved by Faculty Vote 24:0)

**Purpose:** This document defines departmental standards and procedures for the third-year reviews and continuing appointments of non-tenure faculty titles, including research professors, professors of practice, instructors, and lecturers.

**Review:** Departmental standards and procedures for continuing appointment and promotion of non-tenure faculty titles will be reviewed immediately following every graduate program review, or when changes are deemed necessary. The Texas Tech University Guidelines defining these positions are found in [OP 32.17](#), and the continuing appointment and promotion standards and procedures are outlined in [OP 32.34](#).

**Limitations:** This document codifies the standards and procedures in the Department of Plant and Soil Science (PSS), based on current departmental policies that have been approved by faculty vote. Additional procedures required by the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources or by Texas Tech University are addressed by [OP 32.34](#) and by the college's guidelines.

### **Texas Tech University Promotion and Tenure**

For clarity within this document, these conventions are followed:

1. Unless otherwise stated, *professor of practice* and *research professor* are position titles that apply to all ranks (*i.e.* assistant professor of practice, associate professor of practice, professor of practice, research assistant professor, research associate professor, and research professor).
2. Non-tenure refers to non-tenure-acquiring titles, not faculty members in tenure-acquiring titles who are unsuccessful in obtaining tenure.
3. PSS has several faculty members with joint appointments with Texas A&M AgriLife. Promotion and tenure for these faculty members is administrated by the majority institution for these faculty members and is not addressed in this document.

Although lecturers, professors of practice, and research professors are non-tenure-acquiring (non-tenure), they are important and valued contributors to the teaching, research, and service missions of the department. This document does not address faculty members with joint appointments, who are either tenure-acquiring at Texas Tech University or Non-tenure-acquiring faculty members follow many of the same processes as those of tenure-acquiring faculty members, and the policies and procedures for the continuing appointment of faculty members under in these types of positions is stated in [OP 32.34](#):

Persons serving in the lecturer, professor of practice, and research professor position titles have academic freedom. After six years and a positive vote for continuing appointment (see section 3 below), they can only be dismissed for adequate causes. These causes may include documented inadequate performance of job duties following remediation efforts,

repeated violation of university policies and procedures, documented violations of university Title IX policies, conviction of a felony, a change in program budgeting or strategic priorities, a university financial exigency, and major restructuring or elimination of their academic unit.

For non-tenure-acquiring faculty members who are externally funded outside of direct departmental control, employment decisions ultimately rest with the researcher or organization with whom the non-tenure-acquiring faculty member works. However, PSS will prioritize departmental resources, if available, for those who have successfully completed the residency period and other expectations for continuing appointment over those who have not.

The third-year review is expected to be modeled after [OP 32.38 \(Third-Year Review of Tenure-Track Faculty\)](#), and the comprehensive performance evaluation for continuing appointment is based on [OP 32.31 \(Comprehensive Performance Evaluations of Tenured Faculty Members and Faculty Members Who Receive an Academic Promotion\)](#).

### **Expectations in the Department of Plant and Soil Science**

PSS is a diverse and vibrant department with rigorous expectations on productivity in teaching, research, student mentoring, and service. The faculty of PSS is comprised of professionals with a wide range of expertise within five disciplinary clusters based on PSS research and teaching missions: (1) Plant Genetics, Breeding and Biotechnology; (2) Fibers and Biopolymers; (3) Agronomy, Crop Physiology, and Crop Protection; (4) Soil Science; and (5) Horticulture. Each cluster has a senior faculty leader appointed by the department chairperson.

Titles for non-tenure-eligible appointments to the faculty in PSS are assistant professor of practice, associate professor of practice, professor of practice, research assistant professor, research associate professor, research professor, lecturer, senior lecturer, and instructor. Appointments in PSS have the following general requirements and position descriptions:

#### *a. Instructor*

Requires a Master's degree in any specializations relevant to the five disciplinary clusters and foci in the department and successful credentialing, as described by [OP 32.36](#). Instructors teach undergraduate courses, including undergraduate laboratories, on a part-time basis.

#### *b. Lecturer and Senior Lecturer*

Requires a Master's degree in any specializations relevant to the five disciplinary clusters and foci in the department and successful credentialing, as described by [OP 32.36](#). Lecturers and senior lecturers teach undergraduate courses, including undergraduate labs.

#### *c. Professor of Practice*

Requires a Doctorate degree in any specializations relevant to the five disciplinary clusters and foci in the department and successful credentialing, as described by [OP 32.36](#). Professors of practice of all ranks teach undergraduate courses, including undergraduate laboratories. They may also teach graduate courses if graduate faculty status is conferred by the department and the Graduate School. As a general rule, they are not expected to carry any research load as part of

their contracts, and their productivity and success are defined largely based on teaching load and quality of instruction.

*d. Research Professor*

Requires a Doctorate degree in a specialization relevant to the five disciplinary clusters and foci in the department. Research professors of all ranks are appointed with largely research as their main obligations. Typically, they are not expected to teach courses, and their productivity and success are defined largely based on grantsmanship and intellectual contributions, particularly peer-reviewed publications.

**Expectations and Proportions of Effort**

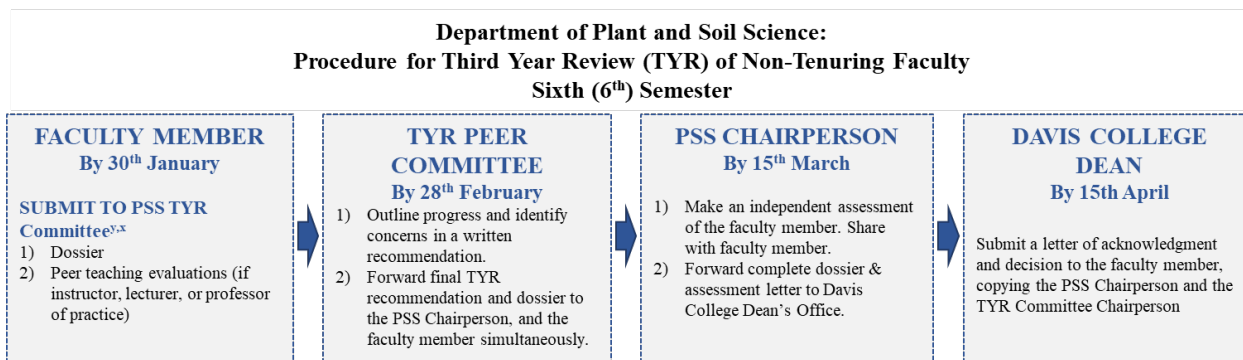
The initial expectations and proportions of effort required for success in any faculty position are defined in the appointment letter. Any changes agreed upon between the faculty member and department chair will be defined during annual performance reviews. The third-year review and continuing appointment review will make use of annual reports by the faculty member and annual reviews by the department chairperson. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to verify that all information in the annual reports and annual reviews are accurate.

**The Third-Year Review (TYR)**

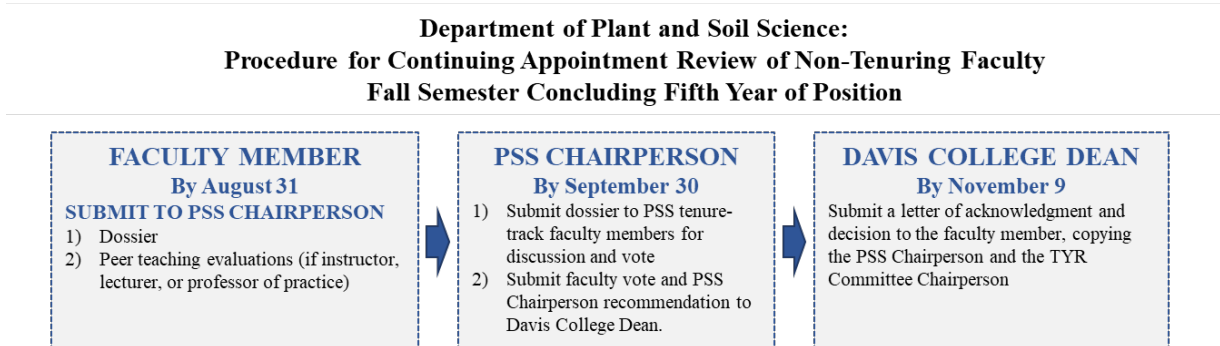
*The third-year review (TYR) is performed by a “TYR Peer Committee” appointed specifically for each non-tenure eligible faculty member.* This committee is appointed by the dean upon the recommendation by the department chairperson and is composed of three faculty members in the department who are tenured or have been granted a continuing appointment. The TYR provides an independent and integrative evaluation of the faculty member’s progress based on the expectations defined in the faculty member’s appointment letter. For teaching faculty, the faculty member’s teaching is also evaluated by the Peer Committee through on-site or on-line observations of classes. The committee’s report provides an unbiased account of the faculty member’s accomplishments to date while also identifying any critical areas where the faculty member needs to put more emphasis for the remaining duration prior to continuing appointment. The department chairperson prepares an assessment of the faculty member’s accomplishments, progress, and areas for improvement based on the independent evaluation by the TYR Peer Committee.

**Third-Year Review Process Timeline**

For both tenure-track and non-tenure faculty members, time accrues for purposes of the TYR and continuing appointment in September of the calendar year when the faculty member is appointed to the position (Fig. 1). The third-year review dossier will be submitted to the TYR committee by January 30 in the sixth long semester of the appointment. The TYR committee recommendation will be submitted by February 28, and the PSS Department Chair will submit the TYR committee recommendation and a department letter by March 15. The dean will submit a decision letter by April 15 of the sixth long semester. The completion and departmental vote for continuing appointment will be completed during the fall semester that concludes the fifth year after initial appointment to the position.



**Figure 1.** Steps and timeline of third-year review (TYR) for non-tenuring faculty members. The first long semester for purposes of review begins September 1 of the calendar year of hire.



**Figure 2.** Steps and timeline of continuing appointment for non-tenuring faculty members. The first long semester for purposes of review begins September 1 of the calendar year of hire.

### Promotion and Continuing Appointment

During the fall semester concluding the fifth year (referred to as the fall of the sixth year in [OP 32.34.3](#); Fig. 2) of the non-tenure eligible faculty member's position, the faculty member may seek continuing appointment according to the rules outlined by [OP 32.34](#):

Faculty members appointed to lecturer, professor of practice, and research professor positions may seek continuing appointment by majority vote of the tenured and continuing-appointment faculty of the academic unit (department/area, college, or school) in which the position exists. Final continuing appointment status is subject to approval by the responsible dean and the PSVP. If the faculty member does not opt to pursue continuing appointment, they may be reappointed on an annual basis at the discretion of the academic unit and the responsible dean.

The official vote of the tenured and continuing-appointment faculty should be made in the fall of the sixth year on the same cycle as occurs for consideration of tenure and promotion in the faculty member's academic unit and college.

#### 5.1. Dossier Format for Non-Tenuring Teaching Faculty

1. Cover letter
2. Updated CV
3. One-page teaching statement
4. List of courses taught in current position, including student numbers and course student evaluation scores

5. Annual chair evaluation letters and TYR evaluation letters
6. Initial appointment letter with salary redacted

### **5.2. Dossier Format for Non-Tenuring Research Faculty**

1. Cover letter
2. Updated CV
3. One-page research statement
4. Annual chair evaluation letters and TYR evaluation letters
5. Initial appointment letter with salary redacted

### **5.3. Departmental Vote and Chairperson's Letter.**

The department chairperson distributes the dossier to all voting members (**all tenured and continuing appointment faculty members in PSS**) two weeks prior to the scheduled department voting.

The department chairperson selects a tenured member of the faculty to serve as spokesperson during faculty deliberation. All voting members are invited to attend and participate in the process. The following protocol will be followed:

- The spokesperson will assign a recorder and two people to count the faculty votes prior to deliberation and voting.
- The recorder takes notes and summarizes the faculty discussion.
- The spokesperson will provide a summary of the candidate's accomplishments and direct the discussion of the candidate's accomplishments in accordance with the expectations for the position.
- At the end of the discussion, each faculty member, including the spokesperson and recorder, submits a secret (unsigned) ballot in favor of or against a continuing appointment. Abstaining votes are discouraged, and faculty members who vote against continuing appointment should provide an explanation on the ballot for the vote. The ballots are collected, counted, and verified by the designated members in the presence of the voting body. The ballots may be delivered to the department chairperson by either the spokesperson or the faculty members who counted the vote.
- The final vote tally is certified by a designated associate chairperson and chairperson of the department together during a meeting separate from the full faculty meeting.
- The recorder shall submit the meeting summary to the department chairperson and may copy the other voting members.

The PSS chairperson shall review the dossier, faculty discussion summary, and faculty vote. The PSS department chairperson letter shall indicate the faculty vote and the chairperson's own vote. The department chairperson's recommendation is provided to the candidate at the same time it is submitted to the dean.