

To: HHS Unit Heads
From: Aaron B. Bowman, Interim Dean
Cc: Mona Holdcraft, Director of Financial Affairs; HHS Associate Deans
Date: September 12, 2024
Re: Lengths of Initial Appointments and Renewals for HHS Faculty

With few exceptions (e.g., associate and full professors who are hired with immediate tenure), most faculty hired at Purdue (a) are appointed initially for a limited number of years, and (b) are eligible for renewal of their initial appointments. The number of years for the initial appointments and renewals differs for tenure-track and for clinical/professional faculty. It also differs for faculty of different ranks.

Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

Tenure-track assistant professors must earn tenure and promotion to associate professor during their sixth year or before. If they do not, their faculty appointments terminate at the end of their seventh year. These seven years are defined as their maximum probationary period. (However, the University allows the probationary period to be extended under certain conditions.) Several years ago, the HHS dean consulted with the heads of all HHS departments and schools (i.e., all HHS units) about whether the lengths of the initial appointments and of the appointment renewals for tenure-track assistant professors should be consistent across HHS units.

After extensive discussion, the dean and the heads reached consensus on the expectation that the length of the initial appointment of a tenure-track assistant professor would normally be three years, the first renewal would be for one year, a second renewal would be for one year, and the final renewal would be for two years. Thus the 7-year probationary period would be divided into appointments whose lengths are 3, 1, 1, and 2 years.

University policy requires that assistant professors receive notice of renewal or non-renewal of their faculty appointments at least 12 months before the appointment's end date. Therefore, heads need to recommend (subject to the dean's and the provost's approval) renewal or non-renewal of assistant professors' appointments before the end of the second year of their initial appointment and again before the end of the third year and of the fourth year. Each semester, as needed, business managers in each HHS unit remind their heads of this requirement and ask them to indicate their decision about the renewal of any tenure-track assistant professor's appointment that will expire in the following year.

It is important to note that this pattern of appointment lengths is only a guideline. The initial appointment for a specific assistant professor could be shorter than three years if a head provides an explanation for the difference that the dean accepts. Similarly, the length of a renewal could differ from the norm if a head provides an explanation for the difference that the dean accepts.

Failure to make reasonable and expected progress towards promotion and tenure, as well as poor performance evaluations, would be reasonable grounds for either not renewing an appointment or shortening the length of a renewal appointment. Heads are encouraged to consult with the dean in the event such actions are being considered.

Untenured but Tenure-Track Associate Professors

When the length of appointments and renewals was considered for tenure-track assistant professors, the HHS dean and unit heads did not discuss the case of individuals hired as untenured but tenure-track associate professors. The University's promotion policy (<https://www.purdue.edu/policies/academic-research-affairs/ib2.html>) specifies the maximum probationary period for tenure-track associate professors as four years.

With the dean's approval, HHS heads in recent years have usually divided those four years into an initial appointment for 3 years and a renewal for 1 year. Therefore, just as for tenure-track assistant professors, heads need to recommend renewal or non-renewal of untenured associate professors' appointments before the end of the second year of their initial appointment. Business managers remind heads of this requirement if a unit has any untenured associate professors whose appointments will expire in the following year.

The basis and considerations for non-renewal of an initial appointment are similar to those noted above for tenure-track Assistant Professors.

Clinical/Professional Faculty

Clinical/professional faculty are not eligible for tenure, so they do not have a probationary period. Instead, the University's leaders, in consultation with the University Senate, set guidelines for the normal length of the initial appointments of clinical/professional faculty and for the renewals of those appointments. The current guidelines are in the "Procedures for Appointing and Promoting Clinical/Professional Faculty" (<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/policies/clinical-faculty.html>).

After reviewing that document and consulting with the heads of all HHS units with clinical/professional faculty, the dean set the expectation that the initial appointments of clinical assistant, associate, and full professors would normally be for three years. (HHS has very few clinical instructors, but their initial appointments would normally be for two years.) Renewals of these appointments would be for three years for clinical assistant professors and five years for clinical associate and full professors. (Renewals of clinical instructors' appointments would normally be for two years.)

University procedures also require that clinical/professional faculty in their first three years of employment be notified of the renewal or non-renewal of their initial appointments at least six months before the appointment's end date. After three years of employment, clinical/professional faculty must be notified of the renewal or non-renewal of their current appointment at least 12 months before its end date. However, in HHS business managers ask heads each semester, as needed, to indicate their decisions about the renewal of all clinical/professional faculty appointments that will expire in the following year.

Finally, just as is true for tenure-track faculty, either the length of the initial appointment or the length of a renewal appointment for a clinical/professional faculty member could be shorter than the usual length if a head provides an explanation for the difference that the dean accepts. Some possible explanations include concerns about a faculty member's performance, changes in academic programs or curricula, or special circumstances. Heads cannot propose initial appointments or renewals for more years than the maximum set by the University's "Procedures" document.

The basis and considerations of non-renewal or alteration in the length of a renewal appointment include poor performance metrics or a poor annual performance review. Similar to tenure-track cases, heads are encouraged to consult with the dean ahead of such actions.