FAQs for SOM EHRA Career Progression

Timing of Promotions

1. One of my faculty members was previously appointed at another institution. How does that time count towards their time in rank at UNC?

   • **Answer:** Prior time in rank in a faculty appointment at other comparable institutions may be counted in the timeline for appointment and promotion recommendations at UNC, although this is not an absolute requirement and must be requested by the Chair. The Chair’s Letter should clarify that they are counting time at another University when requesting an early career progression action.

2. Does time served as a Postdoc count towards faculty member service time and, therefore, decrease the number of years they should spend as an Assistant Professor?

   • **Answer:** No. A Postdoc appointment is an EHRA Non-Faculty appointment and, as such, would not be considered in determining faculty time in rank.

3. A faculty member was hired 6 months ago and my Chair would like to begin processing their promotion. Is this possible?

   • **Answer:** No. Truly outstanding individuals may be considered for early promotion if he/she has been in the active employment and in his/her current rank at the University for at least 18 months. The request for an early promotion cannot begin until the 19th month (i.e. solicitation of letters, vote of assembled full professors, etc.)

4. Do we have to begin compiling promotional documents for a faculty member, based on the prescribed promotional timetable, even if the department feels that faculty member is not yet ready?

   • **Answer:** This depends upon the progression track of the faculty member as follows:
     i. **Fixed-term Track faculty** – No. If the Chair has determined that the faculty member is not ready for promotion, there is no reason to begin drafting the Solicitation Letter nor, consequently the gathering of Official Letters of Recommendation. However the faculty member should always be compiling his/her curriculum vitae (CV) with updated information. If the faculty member is deficient in areas where he/she should be in the promotion progression, it would seem to warrant a meeting with the Chair of the department to discuss reappointment at the present rank and to develop a strategy to improve the faculty member’s position toward meeting a new promotion timeline.
ii. **Tenure Track faculty** – Tenure Track faculty are on a strict timeline, the tenure “clock”, which involves a mandatory 12-month advanced notification prior to his/her current “scheduled end date”. Any delays in the compiling of promotional documents, according to this prescribed timeline, would need to involve the Office of Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development (FALD), the SOM-HR Office and the Department Chair, as well as the faculty member; allowing any lateness in the process to be accounted for and addressed as quickly as possible. If a Department feels a faculty member is not meeting the defined requirements for promotion at the time of promotion, the Chair should consult with FALD and SOM-HR.

iii. **Tenured faculty** – No. As a tenured faculty member, the employee does not have a prescribed timeline for promotion as someone on the tenure track does. However, if the Chair has determined that the faculty member is not ready for promotion, there is still the requirement of Post Tenure Review under the Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic tenure in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Under the School of Medicine’s Policy for Post Tenure Review; which require that such mandatory review take place at a minimum of every five years. If the faculty member is deficient in areas where he/she should be in the promotion progression, it would seem to warrant a meeting with the Chair to discuss continuing as Associate Professor with Tenure and to develop a strategy to improve the faculty member’s position toward seeking promotion in the future, if so desirable. NOTE: Keep in mind that remaining at Associate Professor with Tenure is perfectly respectable and distinctive and the faculty member may choose to remain at this rank indefinitely without seeking a promotion to Full Professor.

5. **My department has compiled a dossier for appointment or promotion, however, when reviewed by the Department’s Full Professors, the overall vote was against the appointment/promotion. What do I do now?**
The departmental decision concerning promotion must be fully explained in a letter from the Chair to the faculty member. The Chair must fully explain a negative departmental decision concerning promotion in a letter that is submitted to the Dean (via the School of Medicine Human Resources Office). Further conversations with the FALD Office and/or the Committee may ensue.

6. **My department would like to promote a faculty member early; how is this defined and what is required to do so?**
   
   - **Answer:** Provided that the faculty member has been in active employment at UNC for 18 months or longer and qualifies as truly outstanding (e.g., excelling in more than one area of excellence as demonstrated in the support documentation from the Chair to be included in the dossier), the Chair of his/her department will make this proposal for early promotion and should address the early promotion and the justification for such at the assembled Full Professors meeting and in the Chair’s Letter to the reviewing Committees.
7. One of my faculty members was recently transitioned from a Lecturer to the Teaching Assistant Professor rank under the University conversion. This individual was in the Lecturer role for more than 10 years. Can we count their time as Lecturer as “time in rank” and promote the faculty member to Teaching Associate Professor now?

- **Answer:** The faculty member’s time in service as Lecturer is viewed as “time in rank” as a Teaching Assistant Professor. A current Teaching Assistant Professor who transitioned through a Job Change ePar from Lecturer is certainly warranted in seeking a promotion to Teaching Associate Professor provided the accumulation of time in rank and other promotion criteria has been met. The Chair’s Letter for such a promotion should be well-drafted to include mention of the Job Change and continuous years of service.

   **The Dossier**

8. Who is responsible for soliciting the letters of recommendation?

- **Answer:** The Solicitation Letter should be sent from the Office of the Department Chair on his/her letterhead. This letter may be drafted and sent by anyone acting on behalf of the Chair and under his/her authority. NOTE: E-mail versions without the letterhead are acceptable, however, letterhead is preferred.

9. Who should be writing the letters of recommendation?

- **Answer:** That depends upon the progression track of the faculty member:
  i. Fixed-term track - The Official Letters (a minimum of two (2) letters of recommendation) should come from reviewers outside of the Candidate’s department and can be from within UNC or outside UNC. They may be from individuals who have a current or prior academic and/or professional affiliation with the faculty member who is being reviewed but must be from reviewers with a rank equal to that of the Candidate’s proposed new rank or higher.
  ii. Tenure/Tenure track - The External Letters of Recommendation (a minimum of four (4) letters of recommendation) should come from reviewers external to the University. The letters need to be from reviewers with a rank equal to that of the faculty member’s proposed new rank or higher.
    1. Tenured Appointments – All four (4) letters shall come from individuals independent of the candidate (e.g., cannot have been a collaborator, mentor, previous co-worker, former dissertation chair, etc.). Two (2) letters will come from a list of names provided by the faculty member (the candidate) and two (2) from individuals selected by the department Chair. All letters received must be submitted and any additional letters received, in addition to these four (4) required letters, should be marked as “additional
letters.” All letters should be marked as either “Chair’s list,” “Candidate’s List” or “Additional Letter” in the upper right hand corner.

2. Initial Tenure Track Appointments – All four (4) may come from individuals with whom the candidate has “known” (e.g., written publications together, have been Postdocs together, etc.)

10. Our department recently requested letters of recommendation from an international individual whose rank is equitable to or higher than that of my faculty member’s rank. How does the department address to the reviewing Committees that this letter meets or exceeds the criteria for a letter of recommendation for promotion?

- **Answer:** Letters of recommendation from reviewers need to be from individuals with a rank equal to or greater than the proposed new rank of the faculty member seeking promotion. In the situation of an academic rank outside of the American system of University ranks and titles, the Department Chair will need to inquire/investigate and thus address the rank of the reviewer in the Chair’s Letter in order to assist the committees in determining whether the reviewer’s rank meets the above requirement.

11. When should the dossier be uploaded in Infoporte?

- **Answer:** The Dossier should be submitted once all of the items required for a complete review are collected and your faculty member is ready for the process to be commenced.

12. When should I send the original dossier to SOM-HR?

- **Answer:** The original documents/dossier should be sent to SOM-HR office once all items have been reviewed for accuracy in Infoporte and the SOM EHRA Consultant has confirmed accuracy/appropriateness via email asking for the originals.

13. Which faculty members should vote as part of my department’s assembled Full Professors?

- **Answer:** All Tenured Full Professors and Fixed-term Full Professors within the department should vote as part of the review process. However, Fixed-term Full Professors may only vote on Fixed-term dossiers while Tenured Full Professors may vote on both Fixed-term and Tenure/Tenure Track dossiers.

14. When should the departmental assembled Full Professors vote take place? What should be reviewed?

- **Answer:** Once the department Chair has determined that the faculty member has met the criteria for career progression, the Chair should bring forward the
complete dossier of the faculty member being recommended for appointment/reappointment/promotion before the assembled Full Professors and a vote.

15. What is the composition of the various review committees in the faculty track progressions?

- **Fixed-term Track Committees** – There is one committee reviewing dossiers for both rising Clinical/Research/Teaching Associate Professors and rising Clinical/Research/Teaching Full Professors which is referred to as the School of Medicine Fixed-Term Promotions Committee (SOM FTC). The committee is comprised of twelve (12) full-time faculty (both fixed-term track and tenure/tenure track) elected by the Faculty of the School of Medicine at the rank of Associate Professor or higher. Since Associate Professors may not review nor vote on the dossiers of Full Professor candidates submitted for review, at least half of the committee should be Full Professors at the discretion of the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development. Likewise, at least half of the committee will be fixed-term faculty to keep a balanced representation. The Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development of the School of Medicine appoints a new Chair annually from among the experienced committee members. NOTE: Changes are currently being discussed whereby the Chair may be appointed every three years rather than annually.

- **Answer: Tenure Committees** – There are two (2) committees for these reappointments/promotions: the SOM Associate Professor Appointment, Promotions, and Tenure (APT) Committee and the SOM Full Professor Appointment, Promotions, and Tenure (APT) Committee.
  
  i. The SOM Associate Professor APT Committee is comprised of nine (9) tenured faculty members at the rank of Associate Professor or Full Professor elected by the Faculty of the School of Medicine through a formal voting process conducted by the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development. The Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development of the School of Medicine appoints the Chair of the Committee annually from those members sitting on the committee. NOTE: Changes are currently being discussed whereby the Chair may be appointed every three years rather than annually.

  ii. The SOM Full Professor APT Committee is comprised of nine (9) tenured faculty members at the rank of Full Professor elected by the Faculty of the School of Medicine through a formal voting process conducted by the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development. The Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Leadership Development of the School of Medicine appoints the Chair of the Committee annually from those members sitting on the committee. NOTE: Changes are currently being discussed whereby the Chair may be appointed every three years rather than annually.

- **Answer: The Dean’s Advisory Committee (DAC)** reviews dossiers for both Fixed-Term Track and Tenure/Tenure Track faculty dossiers which have been approved in the appropriate committee listed above. DAC is comprised of the Dean of the School of Medicine, the Executive Dean of the School of Medicine,
the Chair of each Department of the School of Medicine and the President of the University of North Carolina Hospitals (permanent members as long as the position is held by that individual). The Faculty of the School of Medicine shall elect annually one (1) representative from the basic science departments and one (1) representative from the clinical science departments. DAC votes on the dossiers electronically and these voting results are conveyed to the School of Medicine Human Resources Office (SOM HR) at the end of each month.

16. How are the committee decisions regarding faculty reappointments/promotions communicated to the department, SOM-HR and Human Resources Service Center teams?

- **Answer: Fixed-term committees** - Once the faculty member’s dossier has been approved by the SOM FTC, it proceeds to DAC for an electronic review and vote. Voting results are relayed to the EHRA Consultant at the end of the month in which the DAC vote was conducted; the EHRA Consultant will then communicate the results to the departments.

- **Tenure/Tenure Track committees** - Once the faculty member’s dossier is taken to campus for review (meaning it has been reviewed/approved by the appropriate SOM Committees or does not require School-level approval as a tenure track packet) the SOM EHRA Consultant will enter notes in Infoporte with reference to the “scheduled review dates” for the Campus committees. The department Human Resources Consultant is able to view these notes on behalf of the faculty candidate and relay any status information posted. It is likely that the committee review procession will follow the timeline as referenced in these notes, however, the EHRA Consultant is typically not informed as the dossier review proceeds beyond DAC.

- If a committee in either track has any questions throughout the review process, the question and/or concern will be communicated by the Committee Chair to the Chair of the Department for review/corrective action/additional submissions.