

## COVID Professional Impact Statements

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted the work and lives of faculty, staff and students at UT, Austin and beyond. Like other institutions across the nation, UT Austin has determined that a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* can be used by faculty to document the effect of the pandemic on their professional work. Note that while *COVID Professional Impact Statements* should be considered optional additions to review materials, each host unit (department, college, school) determines whether a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* should be included in core review materials (“dossier”) or in supplemental materials.

Below are listed answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) focused on the *COVID Professional Impact Statement*. These questions (and answers) are grouped by the likely type of person using the statement (including faculty member, faculty and review committee).

### FOR FACULTY

#### **Q: What is a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*?**

**A:** A *COVID Professional Impact Statement* is an optional statement that faculty can include in their review materials. The *Statement* should briefly document the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has directly had on faculty workload and professional opportunities and the resulting impact on faculty productivity, performance and trajectory. This two-page statement can be shared with faculty review committees to contextualize the faculty member’s performance and contributions. The *Statement* can be included for all types of review including annual, mid-probationary, promotion and tenure, and comprehensive periodic review.

#### **Q: What is the purpose of a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*?**

**A:** The purpose of a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* offers a single statement in which faculty can document the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has directly had on faculty workload and professional opportunities and the resulting impact on faculty productivity, performance and trajectory. The *Statement* provides reviewers information that they need to perform a fair, contextualized evaluation of the faculty member’s professional performance and contributions.

#### **Q: What should *COVID Professional Impact Statement* contain?**

**A:** The *COVID Professional Impact Statement*:

- Should include time period (**ONLY**– not the reason) for approved medical or personal leaves related to COVID.
- Should describe the faculty member’s workload, performance and trajectory prior to COVID.
- Should **not** contain **ANY** personal information (e.g., dependent care inaccessibility challenges, personal or dependents’ health information, etc.).
- Should describe the impact that COVID has had on workload and professional opportunities and the resulting impact on faculty productivity, performance and trajectory in each of the relevant areas of specialization (research and creativity, teaching, advising, service, awards).
- Should describe how the faculty member has adjusted or plans to adjust their work in light of COVID’s professional impact to continue or re-build their trajectory.

- Should not be longer than two pages.
- May detail different kinds of professional impact on faculty work (negative and/or positive effects).

**Q: What are examples of professional impacts that can be included in *COVID Professional Impact Statements*?**

**A:** Keeping in mind all facets of our faculty members' workload and professional opportunities depending on faculty title and rank (research, teaching, service, advising, etc.) there are many different possible effects (negative and positive) that COVID might have introduced including but not limited to the following broad examples about changes in:

- Amount, patterns and performance in terms of workload, responsibilities and accomplishments
- Prospects for development and innovation
- Timing and availability of opportunities and access to facilities and personnel

Below we offer some examples of potential professional impacts that might have disrupted faculty members' typical workloads, opportunities, workload distributions, accomplishments and performances. The *COVID Professional Impact Statement* should highlight these impacts while explaining how the faculty member is handling and handled them and how they might redress the impact (if needed) in the future.

**Teaching and Advising Examples**

- – Moving class online might have led to negative impact in terms of re-distribution of workload away from scholarship
- – Impact on student CIS results could be contextualized given the move to online instruction
- – Invisible student care or advising support added to faculty workload
- – Faculty member covered another faculty member's course for some period of time (which is positive in terms of service but might have diverted the work time the faculty member had for scholarship or other workload)
- + Moving class online resulted in improved pedagogical experience of some kind (e.g., increased office hours attendance, etc.)

**Research Examples**

- – Cancellation of
  - Conference presentations / keynotes / invited talks
  - Performances
  - Exhibitions
  - Artist/scholar-in-residence appointments
- + Pivot in response to COVID led to new avenue for research and discovery
- + Scholarly expertise of relevance to pandemics led to more research opportunities and collaborations
- – Closing of labs or access to research resources (field work sites, archives and libraries, human subjects, performance space, data-gathering / collaboration travel, etc.)
- – FRA or other faculty development leave shortchanged, delayed, interrupted, etc.

- Grant funding
  - – Restricted
  - + Expanded opportunities for those in COVID-related research fields
  - – Paying students although not making expected progress in research – time spent re-defining how to achieve research objectives
- – Cancellation or delay of book contracts and publication due to book press closures or restrictions
- – Delays in publications due to reviewer inaccessibility
- – Delays in arrivals or visits of international collaborators (faculty, students, post docs)
- – Other professional responsibilities and workload foci intruded on research or creative performance time

### **Service Example**

- Service leadership workload increased in support of staff, students, faculty (positive in terms of service although might negatively impact time available for other areas of specialization like research or teaching, etc.)
  - Clarify the level of the service leadership (program, department, college, school, institution, community, national, etc.)

### **Q: What should I do if I'm unsure whether I need a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*?**

**A:** Even if you do not think you need a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*, it is always useful to document professional challenges that have impacted your opportunities and workload and ultimately your productivity, performance and trajectory while they are happening so that you will not have to rely on your memory to compose the content for future evaluation statements.

### **Q: Is a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* optional or required?**

**A:** The *COVID Professional Impact Statement* is optional for each of the types of faculty review (annual, mid-probationary, promotion and tenure, and comprehensive periodic review). Each unit (department, college, school) will have their own policy about whether a *Statement* should be included in core review materials (“dossier”) or in supplemental materials. The host unit must clarify how they will interpret a lack of a *Statement* in a faculty member’s review materials. Faculty should check with their supervisor (department or division head or dean) about whether the *Statement* should be included as part of core or supplemental review materials.

### **Q: Do I have to include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*?**

**A:** No. *COVID Professional Impact Statements* are optional. If a faculty member wants to frame the impact of COVID on their workload and professional opportunities and they do not want to compose a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* then they can include relevant information as part of their other candidate statements. For example, the vast majority of faculty have had their teaching impacted by COVID. That professional impact can be documented in teaching statements (for promotion and tenure) or in teaching materials more generally (e.g., for annual review). See previous sections for examples of potential professional impacts. Similarly, the impact can be captured in other statements (e.g., research, service, advising, honors) and review materials. And note that while much of the disruption has been detrimental to conventional

workload and performance, there are positive professional benefits experienced by some faculty that can also be highlighted (e.g., some faculty working in fields related to pandemics, etc.). Last, as with any professional challenges that faculty might experience, faculty should still document the challenges and how they were handled and plans for how they will be overcome to contextualize faculty members' records.

**Q: In which kinds of faculty review can a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* be included?**

**A:** Each unit (department, college, school) will have their own policy about whether to include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* in core or supplemental review materials for each type of faculty review (annual, mid-probationary, comprehensive periodic, promotion and tenure reviews).

**Q: For which academic year should *COVID Professional Impact Statements* be included?**

**A:** The pandemic directly started impacting work in spring, 2020. Inclusion of a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* will be optional for any academic year from 2020 on in which the faculty member's professional workload and opportunities has been impacted by COVID.

**Q: When will *COVID Professional Impact Statements* no longer be accepted?**

**A:** The pandemic directly started impacting work in spring, 2020. Inclusion of a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* will be optional for any academic year from 2020 on in which the faculty member's professional workload and opportunities has been impacted by COVID.

**Q: Is there a standard format for *COVID Professional Impact Statements*?**

**A:** Faculty should check with their unit (department, college, school) to find out whether there is a standard format for *COVID Professional Impact Statements* beyond the two-page limit.

**Q: How do I include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* in my promotion and tenure dossier and other faculty review materials (like mid-probationary review, comprehensive periodic review and annual review)?**

**A:** Each unit (department, college, school) will have their own policy about whether to include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* in core or supplemental review materials for each type of faculty review (annual, mid-probationary, comprehensive periodic, promotion and tenure reviews). If your unit includes the *Statement* in formal review materials, then they must specify in which part of the dossier the *Statement* could appear.

**Q: If I received an extension to my probationary period for COVID-19, may I still include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* in my tenure dossier?**

**A:** Yes, you may include a *COVID Professional Impact Statement* even if you have received a COVID extension to your probationary period.

## **Review Committee Recommendations**

**Q. How does COVID change faculty review and promotion standards?**

**A.** COVID's impact does not change the standards for review and promotion, nor is it meant to be an explanation for not meeting standards.

**Q: Should faculty review committees assume that all faculty have been equally impacted by COVID?**

**A:** No. Even within the same discipline, it should not be assumed that the direct professional impact of COVID on faculty workload and professional opportunities and how that has influenced faculty performance and trajectories has been the same.

**Q: What should a unit (department, school, college) share with its faculty about the submission of a *COVID Professional Impact Statement*?**

**A:** It is critical that each unit clarify the following:

- *COVID Professional Impact Statements* are optional documents that may be included as part of review materials for all types of faculty review including
  - Annual review,
  - Mid-probationary review,
  - Comprehensive periodic review, and
  - Promotion and tenure review
- In addition to the two-page limit, the unit should clarify any additional formatting requirements that they have for the *Statement*
- The unit must specify whether *Statements* should be included in part of core or supplemental faculty review materials.
- The unit should clarify how a failure to include a *Statement* will be interpreted (e.g., that COVID has had no substantial professional impact on faculty workload and professional opportunities).
- Unit leadership should work with the review committees (before the review starts) to clarify how to use *COVID Professional Impact Statements*' content to contextualize their review.
  - Emphasize the importance of keeping confidential contents of *Statements* if faculty mistakenly include personal circumstances in them
  - Inform review committees that the University's response to COVID's impact on faculty cannot change standards for review
  - For faculty who have taken a personal leave due to COVID, that should be factored into the timeframe used in the review (as should any other types of personal leave)
- Units should use the annual review process as an opportunity
  - to identify faculty who are struggling and find ways to offer them access to resources [e.g., mentor(s)] to support their future professional development, and also
  - to notice the faculty who are finding ways to thrive professionally to acknowledge their performance and contributions.

**Q: Beyond possible inclusion of the *COVID Professional Impact Statement*, are there any other best practices that my unit might consider as a part of annual review when the year under review coincides with COVID?**

**A:** Review committees must carefully interpret Course Instructor Survey (CIS) results from spring, summer and fall, 2020, in light of the multiple disruptions including the rapid move to

online instruction for both faculty and students. In addition, for annual / merit review, it might be reasonable to consider

- Adding a merit criterion that can be used to reward professional contributions that are less frequently directly acknowledged and that were essential but perhaps less visible to move the unit (institution, etc.) forward during the pandemic, for example:
  - Contributions to mentoring, support / care / training of colleagues and students; instruction).
- Expanding the period evaluated for annual review to entail a sliding average that includes additional prior years' contributions and performance as part of the annual review.
- Using the annual review process as an opportunity
  - a. to identify faculty who are struggling and find ways to offer them access to resources [e.g., mentor(s)] to support their future professional development, and also
  - b. to notice the faculty who are finding ways to thrive professionally to acknowledge their performance and contributions.

**Q. How should review committees use information shared in *COVID Professional Impact Statements*?**

A. Review committees should adhere to the following guidance:

- Use the *COVID Professional Impact Statement* to contextualize the faculty candidate's performance and contributions given the pandemic's disruption of faculty workload and professional opportunities.
- COVID's impact does not change the standards for review and promotion.
- If a faculty member mistakenly reveals details of personal circumstances (beyond timeframe for a personal leave) then the review committee **must** keep those details confidential.
- As with any review even in non-pandemic times, if a tenure-track faculty member takes a personal leave (including tenure clock / probationary period extension), that should frame the period of review such that it does not include the timeframe during which the personal leave occurred.
- If a tenured associate professor or professional / non-tenure-track faculty member's record includes a personal circumstances flag during their time in rank, then that should frame the period of the multi-year review such that it does not include the year that was flagged.
- The review committee should acknowledge that COVID has not affected faculty workload and professional opportunities equally