

## FAQ on Revising WKU's Annual Evaluation Process (updated 6-14-24)

### 1. What are the goals of the annual evaluation process at WKU?

The goals are to articulate clear expectations for faculty so they know where they stand in terms of their annual performance and to provide faculty with recommendations on how they might improve their performance in the future to enhance their overall professional growth.

### 2. Why are we revising the way we do annual evaluations for faculty?

There have been concerns raised for a number of years regarding the inconsistency of evaluations in the different colleges across campus. For example, colleges use different terminology to describe the process (annual evaluation, performance review, annual appraisal, etc.). Some colleges treat continuance and annual evaluation discretely, while others blur them together. Most colleges have focused on three or four areas (teaching, scholarly/creative activity, service, professional conduct/collegiality), while others have included additional areas (participation in activities, goal progression). Some colleges have directly addressed and included post-tenure review, while others have implied a post-tenure review. Some colleges have used three-point scales to assess, while others have used a six- or seven-point scale). Some colleges have used e-signature forms to manage annual evaluation, while others have relied on email. The aim is to bring a reasonable amount of consistency to the process across colleges, but to still allow departments and colleges to define the standards within some parameters so that faculty and chair/directors can focus less on the mechanics of the process and more on the substance. The updated process also reduces work for tenure-eligible colleagues (see #11) and streamlines the processes for faculty, chairs, and administrative personnel.

### 3. What kind of consistency will the new system bring?

1. WKU has adopted uniform terminology to improve understanding
  - **Annual Activity Packet**—the packet that all tenured faculty and non-tenure-eligible faculty submit for the annual evaluation process.
  - **Annual Activity & Continuance Packet**—an expanded packet that tenure-eligible, junior colleagues submit for both annual evaluation and continuance.
  - **Annual Evaluation**—the review that department chairs/directors do when assessing the Annual Activity Packet.
  - **Continuance**—the process whereby the continuance committee, department chairs, deans, and the Provost evaluate the Annual Activity & Continuance Packet to determine if an untenured colleague is making good progress towards tenure and promotion requirements/benchmarks.
  - **Post-tenure Review**—the process, incorporated into Annual Evaluation, whereby the department chair evaluates the Annual Activity Packet to determine whether a tenured colleague is satisfactorily meeting requirements of a tenured professor, commending superior performance, and providing support in areas needing improvement.
2. Each college will focus on the same broad areas; teaching, scholarly/creative activity, service, and professionalism.

3. Each college will use a four-point scale (with N/A as an option based on terms of appointment letter) with these broad labels/definitions to evaluate teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service:
  - **Distinguished:** *indicates a truly exceptional level of performance*
  - **Skilled:** *indicates a level of strong performance*
  - **Baseline:** *indicates a level of meeting minimum expectations*
  - **Unsatisfactory:** *indicates a level of not meeting minimum expectations*
4. Each college will evaluate professionalism with a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory rating.
5. Each college will indicate whether a tenured faculty member has satisfactorily met expectations for post-tenure review.
6. The system will be managed by the Boomi Workflow system

#### **4. What materials will faculty submit as part of the annual evaluation process?**

Over the past three years, the Provost's Office has encouraged departments/schools/colleges to develop tables of contents and templates outlining the materials that should be submitted. We have encouraged units to involve faculty in creating the expectations and to limit the request to materials needed to evaluate performance, avoiding redundancy and streamlining as much as possible. Chairs/directors should have enough information to evaluate annual performance and provide helpful feedback. Faculty will submit the packet as a single document along with an updated CV (see #13).

#### **5. What kind of feedback will faculty get?**

Chairs/directors will review the faculty member's packet in Boomi and commence their evaluation. As noted, each department has developed a set of materials to be reviewed, and each college has developed their own Annual Evaluation Form that chairs will use for the process. After chairs review the faculty member's work, they will complete the form with ratings and narrative comments and then upload it into the Boomi system (some chairs may choose to preview the form with faculty outside the Boomi system before submitting). Faculty will receive a notification when the form is complete and have an opportunity to discuss the evaluation with the chair and indicate that they have received it without comment, or, if desired, indicate that they have received it and include a response to the evaluation which becomes part of the record.

#### **6. What happens after the faculty member has reviewed and accepted and/or commented upon the evaluation?**

The dean receives the evaluation, reviews it, and may provide comment. Faculty will receive a notification and then the evaluation is stored in the system.

#### **7. How was the updated process developed and who provided feedback?**

- Over the past few years, the Faculty Handbook and the Faculty Welfare Committees as well as faculty at-large have expressed concerns about the consistency of the annual evaluation process across colleges. The Associate Provost for Faculty fielded many of the concerns and brought them to the deans.

- In summer of 2023, Council of Deans (CAD) met and agreed to develop a framework to address some of those concerns, to bring about more consistency across colleges, and to begin discussing the plans with department chairs/directors.
- In late September, department chairs provided feedback about the annual evaluation process via a flash survey; in early October, chairs were given a detailed update on the state of the process and working parameters.
- In addition, each dean designated a college representative to begin a more detailed conversation about updating the process. The Associate Provost for Faculty met with that group and asked them to bring updates to chairs in their colleges.
- In fall 2023, the Associate Provost also requested input from the Faculty Handbook Committee as part of his monthly meetings with them.
- In mid-December, out of the many conversations with different constituencies, a detailed set of written parameters was created and shared with deans, and they were asked to begin having fuller discussions with chairs in January—departments and colleges were tasked to create clear expectations for each level of performance.
- In January, the Associate Provost surveyed department chairs on operationalizing the process. He also updated associate deans about the status of the process, and, in February, met with a second group of advisory chairs to get their input on the mechanics of the process, and to help streamline and make the evaluation more meaningful. In late February, the Associate Provost also solicited feedback from new department chairs as part of their regular meeting.
- Deans were in conversation with leadership teams in spring 2024 and were directed to ask chairs to involve their faculty in discussions of the process, particularly in defining levels of performance. Deans also had regular conversation about the updates at CAD meetings.
- In January, February and March, the Associate Provost updated the Faculty Handbook Committee. In February and March, they provided extensive, helpful feedback on definitions of Professionalism.
- In mid-March, the Associate Provost provided another update to all chairs.
- In April, the Provost updated faculty-all on the evaluation process and asked deans to canvass chairs/departments to determine if they wanted to use the old college form and pilot the new college form or use the new college form. Two departments elected to use the old college form and pilot the new form.

#### **8. Who came up with the terms *Distinguished, Skilled, Baseline, and Unsatisfactory*?**

Developing and defining the scale and terms have been recursive processes. In summer 2023, deans were asked to review their annual evaluation forms and meet to discuss the scale and terms we would use moving forward. Out of that conversation, we learned that in 2023-24 the College of Education and Behavioral Science had spent time considering the best way to develop a scale and what labels might be used for their college; they settled on *Unsatisfactory, Minimal or Needs Improvement, Proficient, Distinguished*. After more discussion among deans and the Provost, they agreed to use a four-point scale and these terms in principle and to run the approach by a group of advisory department chairs/directors. Advisory chairs recommended that *Minimal or Needs Improvement* change to *Baseline* and *Proficient* change to

*Skilled.* Deans agreed to the suggestions in mid-fall. In fall 2023, Faculty Handbook Committee was briefed on the status of the process in light of their conversations about the annual evaluation process and post-tenure review—that committee emphasized the importance of each department creating definitions of the levels. That concern was communicated to the deans. In January/February 2024, the Associate Provost worked with another group of advisory chairs to write broad university definitions of the terms. Colleges/departments were tasked with aligning the terms with departmental expectations for teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service.

**9. Will there be quotas for rating faculty at each level for each criterion?**

No. Departments/schools/colleges have developed criteria for each level of performance and ratings will be based on those descriptions.

**10. What happens if a faculty member receives an *Unsatisfactory* for one of the categories?**

This is not really a new rating although the label may be different for some colleges. In all current college forms, *Unsatisfactory* (AKA *Unacceptable* or *Does not Meet Expectations*) is an option. In those cases, colleagues have been and would continue to be offered a plan and support to improve; they have had and would continue to have an opportunity to discuss the plan with their chair. If faculty believe the rating is unfairly awarded, they will continue to have the option write a response (see #5).

**11. What is the difference between Continuation, Annual Evaluation, and Post-tenure Review?**

As noted above, there has been inconsistency in how Continuation, Annual Evaluation, and Post-tenure Review have been handled across the colleges.

- As defined above in #2, *Continuation* is a process in which tenure-eligible colleagues receive feedback on their progress towards tenure from the department’s continuation committee, the chair/director, the dean, and the Provost.
- *Annual Evaluation* is a discrete process (separate from Continuation) where all faculty (tenure-eligible, tenured, non-tenure eligible) are evaluated on their annual performance by their department chair (see *Faculty Handbook*, II.X).
- *Post-tenure Review* is a continuing process incorporated into the *Annual Evaluation* of tenured faculty “commending and recognizing superior performance, encouraging and facilitating improvement whenever necessary, maximizing opportunities for continuing professional development, and advancing attainment of institutional goals” (*Faculty Handbook*, VI.B).
- The new workflows clarify that
  - Continuation and Annual Evaluation are different processes, but tenure-eligible, untenured colleagues will provide the same packet (the Continuation & Annual Evaluation Packet) in two workflows; in the Continuation workflow, the packet is evaluated by the department’s continuation committee, the chair, the dean, and the Provost on their progress towards tenure; in the Annual Evaluation, the department chair evaluates the faculty member’s overall annual performance.

- For tenured colleagues, Post-tenure Review is incorporated into the Annual Evaluation process.

### **12. Is Professionalism a new category?**

No. Five of six colleges have had professional conduct/professional standards/collegiality/organizational citizenship/professional-ethical standards as part of their annual evaluations; the other college frames professionalism in the context of relationships with students and colleagues. *The Faculty Handbook* has a section on Professional Conduct (II.D) and all employees are expected to follow WKU's Standards of Conduct policy for Employees. Council of Deans has worked with the Faculty Handbook Committee to develop consistent language to help clarify expectations of professionalism (WKU, college, department/school, and professional organizations) for annual evaluations. Staff Senate reviewed the Standards of Conduct policy in late spring since the policy applies to all WKU employees.

### **13. Are we still using Anthology-Portfolio as part of Annual Evaluation?**

No. A number of factors influenced this decision:

- When we purchased access to the platform in fall 2021, our aim was to acquire a system that would make several processes more efficient and streamline/simplify operations for users (faculty, chair/directors, administrators).
- We anticipated some challenges using the system for continuance/tenure/promotion and annual evaluation, but the company (then Chalk and Wire, now Anthology) was initially open to making adjustments for these personnel-based processes.
- The system has worked well for CEBS's and GFCB's accreditation work and moderately well for Academic Program Review. However, despite several requests, the company has not delivered on improvements for personnel processes.
- Over two years of using the system for annual evaluation, most faculty seem not to have seen the value in using the system to organize their materials and found it cumbersome and counterintuitive. It has created challenges on the backend with record-keeping for colleges and academic affairs. Because of approval queue challenges within Anthology-Portfolio, we have had to operate these processes with TWO systems (Anthology-Portfolio AND either E-signature or e-mail). The main thing we did not want to happen has happened—the mechanics of the system have obstructed the substantive, meaningful work that should come from personnel processes.
- CAD discussed whether we should continue to use the system for personnel processes in January and decided *no*, but to consult chairs/directors. In late January, chairs/directors were surveyed about continuing to use the Anthology-Portfolio; of the 32 chairs responding, 28 preferred the Boomi system and 4 preferred Anthology-Portfolio.
- While we realize there are concerns with “platform-of-the-month” fatigue, the reality is that most departments/colleges have simply asked colleagues to submit a packet as a single document (and sometimes separate SITEs documents) into Anthology. With the updated system, faculty will be able to submit a single document for annual evaluation along with an updated CV into one system (instead of two). We have used Boomi Workflow to manage Continuance and Tenure and Promotion for a year now, and it has

been a success—user-friendly, intuitive, streamlined, and efficient. The aim is to make the new Boomi workflow for personnel processes just as successful.

**14. When will the updated system commence?**

The updated process begins in July 2024. In June information on the mechanics of the process will begin rolling out.

**15. Why is there no mention of merit pay?**

One faculty senate representative asked if merit pay was deliberately left out of the FAQ. Yes, it was. While the handbook talks about using annual evaluations to determine merit pay, currently, there is no additional money to start that process. In recent years, WKU has focused on cost-of-living raises, instead. Merit pay was left out because we did not want to suggest that it was coming in the near future. The senate representative asked if we could explore other ways to reward faculty who are doing outstanding work, and we have started conversations exploring how that could possibly work.