

Guidance on annual faculty evaluations for 2020: Evaluating our work in a pandemic

We recognize that **faculty work** in 2020 has been **affected by COVID-19**:

- As individuals, we experienced the impacts in different ways.
- These impacts are not distributed evenly.
- We cannot assume we know the impacts across our faculty.

Thus, **we need a way to take COVID-19 disruptions into account** when determining performance ratings.

Some of the criteria in our current faculty evaluation plans may need to be applied differently:

1. It may be that some normally expected activities were simply not possible to accomplish or were drastically curtailed, especially in the area of scholarship and creative activity. So expecting the same type and level of activity in 2020 doesn't make sense; moreover, faculty may have made up for the disruption with meaningful activities we do not normally recognize;
2. Teaching faculty were asked to shift to online or hybrid formats, which may have involved a tremendous amount of effort, and accomplishments in this area deserve to be recognized.

In this time of relative isolation, the evaluation process will help increase communication, understanding, and awareness of the challenges we face in our work. This experience will help us when we determine how to take COVID-19 impacts into account for other evaluations, like PTTR, P&T, and PTR.

Faculty Development, therefore, supports assessing faculty achievements relative to opportunity for 2020 annual evaluations. We came to this approach after conversations with the Faculty Success Design Team and faculty governance committees on our campus, and with faculty affairs leaders nationally. At the core of this effort are steps that promote equity and consistency through documentation:

1. Require faculty to submit brief narratives of how COVID-19 disrupted their work and how they adjusted (suggested 250-500 words). Requiring these is necessary to help relieve faculty from having to decide whether submitting a statement in the first place would single them out in some way and lead to a biased evaluation (known as "bias avoidance" in the literature).
2. Require chairs/directors/deans/annual evaluation committee members to take these into account in meaningful written evaluations.

What faculty members need to do:

Faculty members shall prepare and submit COVID-19 narratives to chairs/deans/annual evaluation committees along with their regular annual report materials, addressing the main component(s) of their job description. Here is a guide for writing the narrative:

- **How have COVID-19 disruptions affected your workload with respect to teaching?**

A common impact may be that significant additional effort had to be dedicated to teaching because of the move to online/hybrid. Simply mention that, and follow in the narrative with a list of additional activities going beyond normal expectations (or be sure these are listed elsewhere in your annual report): CTE/CODL/IT training sessions, course redesign efforts, elaboration or refinement of student learning outcomes, recording of lectures and other online materials, etc. The [CTE Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness](#) framework provides more complete guidance for how you can document your teaching-related work, including the intellectual work of redesigning your course for the COVID context. You may choose to include the reports from the student surveys of teaching in 2020, but they are not required*.

**Recall that Spring 2020 student surveys of teaching are to be used for developmental purposes only. For Summer and Fall 2020, faculty have the option to include the reports in their annual report materials. In absence of student survey reports, units may require faculty to provide reflections on what they learned or changed about their teaching in response to the reports. There are numerous other elements of teaching effectiveness for which units may request evidence, which is consistent with our rules and follows practices developed out of [CTE's Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness project](#).*

- **What was the impact of COVID-19 disruptions on your scholarship/creative work?**

A common impact may be that normal opportunities for completing research or creative work had to be cancelled outright, significantly delayed, or adjusted because of closures or cancellations. Or it may be that your effort was diverted away from scholarship/creative work in order to give greater effort to teaching or other areas. Normal opportunities would include, but not be limited to archival work, performances, conference presentations, human subjects research, lab research, fieldwork. Briefly describe adjustments and revised plans for progress, even if the outcomes of the work have not been realized. In the narrative, or elsewhere in the annual report, list scholarship/creative work that was accomplished in lieu of disrupted activities (for example, time spent learning new literature, writing up findings from previously completed work, revising manuscripts, learning new statistical techniques, exploring new online ways to disseminate research findings or creative work).

- **How did COVID-19 disruptions alter how you contributed to service?**

Planned service activities may have been delayed or cancelled. Some faculty took on unplanned service that required large amounts of time and attention. Briefly describe the most pressing considerations or concerns that motivated your service activities. In the narrative or elsewhere in the annual report, list what was accomplished in service.

- **For Unclassified Academic Staff: How did COVID-19 affect your professional performance activities?**

Document disruptions that diminished opportunities to meet these responsibilities, and how you may have reallocated work to other areas of your job description. In the statement or elsewhere in the annual report, list activities that were accomplished in lieu of normal expectations.

What chairs/directors, deans, and evaluation committees need to do:

Request COVID-19 narratives: Please reach out to your faculty (unclassified academic staff, term-contracted faculty [lecturers, teaching professors, professors of the practice with .5 FTE or higher], and tenured/tenure-track faculty), and request that COVID-19 narratives be included in the materials that are reviewed for annual evaluation.

Take COVID-19 narratives into account when conducting evaluations: Ensure that written evaluations contain an explanation of how evaluation criteria accounted for COVID-19 disruptions and recognized faculty achievements relative to opportunity. For example:

- **Teaching:** Faculty members may write that they reallocated effort away from scholarship to teaching because classes moved online. The written evaluation should explain how criteria were applied to account for that. In teaching, one would expect evidence of the additional work done in teaching in the annual report (for example, workshop attendance, revised syllabus, increased 1:1 work with students, reflection on reports from student surveys of teaching, course redesign documentation). Accordingly, criteria in scholarship and service would be applied differently, as applicable. Evaluation of teaching is challenging this year because a standard source of evidence, student ratings, is not required, and the teaching itself was especially difficult. Additional guidance on evaluating teaching is available from [CTE's Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness project](#). It includes templates to help faculty document their teaching contributions for annual review (with or without including student feedback), and tools and frameworks for evaluating and providing feedback on an instructor's materials.
- **Scholarship:** A faculty member may write that invited presentations were cancelled and normal research activities halted or slowed in labs, archives, or fieldwork. The written evaluation would explain how criteria were applied differently, for example, by crediting presentations that were invited and listing any scholarship-related activity done in place of normally expected activities. The evaluation may credit evidence of time spent learning new literature, writing up findings from previously completed work, revising manuscripts, learning new statistical techniques, exploring new online ways to disseminate research findings or creative work. If time was reallocated away from scholarship/creative activity, one would expect a reduction in the quantity of work accomplished.
- **Service:** A faculty member may write that planned activities were put on hold in order to focus effort on teaching. Conversely, many unplanned activities may have required a greater amount of time than is typical. The written evaluation should recognize the lesser or greater effort and apply criteria differently as needed.
- **Professional performance:** Unclassified Academic Staff may report that normal job duties in the area of professional performance were curtailed because of the disruptions of COVID-19. The evaluation should consider whether opportunities to carry out these duties were reduced. Expectations, especially in terms of the quantity of work accomplished in this area, should be adjusted accordingly.

Faculty and unit leaders thinking beyond the 2020 annual evaluation

- Unit leaders should use the experience with the annual evaluation process to facilitate individual and unit-wide conversations about how best to support the continued development

and career progress of faculty. That will help provide a shared understanding of the pandemic's impact on the discipline. Additional guidance on this topic will be provided in the coming weeks.

- Separate from the annual evaluation process, if faculty members are experiencing any difficulties in meeting work obligations they should reach out to their dean/chair/director:
 - It is important for unit leaders to understand whether the difficulties in fulfilling work obligations are related to health-related concerns, school or child-care concerns, or some other personal or professional matter.
 - Based on faculty members' individual circumstances, unit leaders can help determine whether there are ways to minimize impact to the unit's mission.
 - Faculty Development and Employee Relations in Human Resource Management (HRM) are partners in supporting unit leaders and individual faculty members as they think through and implement options for helping address the varied circumstances that complicate faculty work during this time. Depending on individual circumstances, it may be appropriate to address challenges through one or more of the following: Modified Instructional Duties, Differential Allocation of Effort (tenured/tenure-track faculty), FMLA, leaves of absence, or voluntary reduction of FTE.

I look forward to supporting you in our ongoing efforts to carry out an evaluation process that is thoughtful and fair.

Take care and stay well,

Chris



J. Christopher Brown

Professor
Geography and Atmospheric Science
Environmental Studies Program
Vice Provost for Faculty Development
Jcbrown2@ku.edu