

School of Medicine Policy on Suspension of the Tenure Probationary Period

The Washington University Policy on Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure (the “Tenure Policy”) provides for three basic methods of addressing conflicts between professional obligations and family responsibilities or other exceptional personal circumstances.¹ First, faculty members who find that child-rearing responsibilities, health or family-related problems, or other personal circumstances prevent him/her from devoting full time to responsibilities as a member of the faculty may apply for a part-time leave of absence that will not count toward the faculty member’s tenure probationary period. Second, in such situations faculty members may apply for suspension of their probationary period without taking a part-time leave. Third, faculty members and their departments or programs may address such issues by a partial reassignment of faculty duties, again without recourse to part-time leave.

This School of Medicine policy describes the process for seeking and approving these arrangements.

A. Part-Time Leave of Absence

Under the circumstances described above and in the Tenure Policy, faculty members may apply to the appropriate department or program head and the Dean for a part-time leave of absence. The agreement for part-time leave must be in writing and cover the period of the leave, the conditions with respect to returning to full-time service,

¹ Section IV.B.2 of the Tenure Policy states, in pertinent part:

The faculty member on appointment for a probationary period may find that child-rearing responsibilities, health or family-related problems, or other personal circumstances prevent him or her from devoting full time to responsibilities as a member of the faculty. When this occurs, the faculty member shall have the opportunity to apply to the appropriate administrative officers for a part-time leave of absence. The agreement for part-time leave of absence shall be in writing and shall cover the period of the part-time leave, the conditions with respect to returning to full-time service, salary, the faculty member's responsibilities while on part-time leave, and other relevant factors. The faculty member and the appropriate administrative officers shall receive a copy of the agreement. Any time which the faculty member spends on part-time leave of absence shall not count toward the probationary period.

In addition to such part-time leave, each school may establish other policies designed to ameliorate conflicts between professional responsibilities and family responsibilities or other exceptional personal circumstances. Such policies may entail suspension of the tenure probationary period and/or partial reassignment of faculty duties without recourse to part time leave. Requests for such arrangements must be initiated by the faculty member. Agreements for such arrangements shall be in writing and shall cover the period of the arrangement, the conditions on which the arrangement is granted, the faculty member’s salary and responsibilities during the arrangement, and other relevant factors. The faculty member and the appropriate administrative officers shall receive a copy of the agreement. Limits on the number and length of suspensions of the tenure probationary period pursuant to this paragraph shall be established by each school in its policy.

salary, the faculty member's responsibilities while on leave, and other relevant factors. The department or program will inform Human Resources for record-keeping purposes when a leave has been granted.

Time spent on such part-time leave will not count toward the faculty member's probationary period. To avoid uncertainty and administrative difficulties that deviations from the usual yearly tenure review schedule would create, the period of time for which the probationary period will be suspended will be rounded up to the nearest whole number of years.

In connection with tenure decisions, a faculty member's leave of absence will not be counted against him/her, and any work in which he/she engaged during leave may be considered.

B. Probationary Period Suspension (without leave)

Under the circumstances described above and in the Tenure Policy, faculty members may apply in writing to the appropriate department or program head and the Dean for suspension of the tenure probationary period, without recourse to part-time leave. The probationary period may be suspended in one-year increments per triggering event or condition. Unless extraordinary circumstances exist and the department or program head and the Dean have consented in writing, suspension of the probationary period under this provision may be granted no more than twice – for a maximum total of two years – during a faculty member's probationary period.

The agreement to suspend the probationary period under this provision must be in writing and cover the period of the suspension, the conditions on which the suspension is granted, the faculty member's salary and responsibilities during the suspension, and other relevant factors. The department or program will inform Human Resources for record-keeping purposes when a leave has been granted.

When the reason for requesting the probationary period suspension involves the birth, adoption or foster placement of a child, the written request should be addressed to the department or program head and Dean as soon as the circumstances triggering the request become known. The request must occur within two years of the addition of the new child to the family. If both parents are WUSM faculty, both parents are eligible to request the 1-year probationary period suspension.

Other circumstances – including serious personal illness or injury, caring for a seriously ill family member, or other exceptional circumstances – may also trigger the request for suspension of the probationary period. In those circumstances, the faculty member should request the suspension from the department or program head and Dean as soon as the need becomes apparent, but no more than one year after the illness, injury or other triggering event occurred.

The decision to grant or deny a probationary period suspension will not be based on whether medical or parental leave was previously taken for the triggering event. However, the decision may be based on whether or not part-time leave was previously granted for the same event, since part-time leave automatically triggers suspension of the probationary period.

In connection with tenure decisions, a faculty member's probationary period suspension will not be counted against him/her, and any work in which he/she engaged during the suspension may be considered.

C. Workload Relief

If a faculty member becomes a new parent (by birth, adoption or foster placement), she/he may also apply for relief from duties such as teaching and committee work. This may be utilized instead of part-time leave of absence, or instead of or in addition to non-leave suspension of the probationary period. The workload relief agreement must be in writing and cover the period of the relief, the conditions on which the relief is granted, the faculty member's salary and responsibilities during the relief period, and other relevant factors. In developing such agreements, all commitments with regard to research contracts and patient care must be carefully evaluated and all obligations in those areas must be fulfilled.