



Documenting the COVID-19 Impact at Oakland University Best Practices as Identified by the AAUP Chapter at Oakland University

Why document the impact

The AAUP is aware of a potential problem facing its members. Faculty workloads have been dramatically transformed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The movement of courses online, the closure of laboratories, and other substantive changes to the academic environment have all forced faculty to re-order their work agendas. Heightened stress levels triggered by social distancing and continued high infection rates have complicated the efforts of faculty to respond to these changes in workload. Many faculty have seen their productivity damaged, altering their career trajectories.

The impact of COVID-19 has transformed faculty life, but it has affected some groups far more significantly than others. Growing documentation shows that for certain groups on campus--especially contingent faculty, faculty of color, and women--the impact is more severe. Before the pandemic, members of these groups experienced greater responsibilities for student mentoring, carried more service responsibilities, and received less university support. This is a situation magnified by COVID-19. The pandemic has further complicated the lives of faculty with young children, those who have family members with special needs, and those with compromised immune systems.

The impacts of the pandemic will have a long-term impact on our faculty. It is in our self-interest to better understand and explain how COVID-19 is transforming faculty lives so that we can adjust workload and promotion expectations. We need to thoughtfully and carefully document the problems interfering with the work of the faculty. With that information we can create a more fair evaluation process. By creating a more fair system, we will improve the lives of our faculty, but also those of our students. In the end, our entire community will benefit from a more equitable university environment.

The importance of individual documentation

COVID-19 has had a wide variety of impacts on faculty. The individual circumstances of each faculty member—potentially affected by discipline, rank, family obligations, and personal health—has unevenly disrupted academic careers. Research agendas, teaching effectiveness, and service have all been up-ended. The consequences for faculty reviews are significant. A letter of agreement between the administration and the AAUP stipulates that, "If a Faculty Member believes that he/she failed to meet University Standards because of the COVID-19 Pandemic in some way, then the Faculty Member should demonstrate the nexus between the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Faculty Member's failure to meet University Standards in his or her dossier for current and subsequent review for Oakland's consideration."

Individual faculty members should be documenting the particular impact of COVID-19 on their ability to perform their professional duties as outlined in their unit's criteria. In the future, faculty members will need to make others understand the impact of COVID-19 on their career trajectories. Taking the time to document these realities now will help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on a faculty member's career.

This following is **NOT** a comprehensive list; faculty should consider impacts on **research, teaching and service** particular to their individual unit criteria and individual career paths:

- Identify any additional burdens caused by increased child care, supervision of young children in distance learning programs, responsibilities for other family members.
- Identify the amount of time used to convert courses to online versions, and determine whether teaching online is more time consuming than face to face.
- Identify equipment (both hardware and software) that was needed to create a smoother conversion to online. List any delays in getting the needed equipment as well as any personal costs.
- List any courses or workshops you needed to take to facilitate changes in your teaching. Also, list any workshops you taught to facilitate others' learning or time you spent helping other faculty make the transition to online teaching.
- Identify any course overloads or other changes to work schedule that were caused by personnel changes such as COVID-related retirement or resignations.
- Address how advising changed. Note any extra responsibilities in helping students negotiate their emotional, financial, and academic problems caused by the pandemic.
- List any work that needed to be done to prepare laboratory, studio, and other instructional space as we returned from the shutdown. Note any problems requesting PPE or other equipment and any changing responsibility for enforcement of new pandemic protocols in laboratories and classrooms.
- Note any interruptions of access to laboratories, computer resources, performance spaces, or studios that affected your scholarship. This might include access to research subjects.
- Note any interruptions in recruiting students to assist in research projects, performances or other collaborative faculty-student work.
- Note any interruptions of sabbaticals or other leaves.
- List cancelled conferences and other limitations on professional travel.
- If you adjusted your research agenda to study the pandemic, its impact, or the response, note whether you see this as a positive or a negative career direction.
- Note the impact of travel restrictions on your professional work.

Moving forward

The unique, and often unpredictable, impacts of the pandemic place much of the initial work on individual faculty members. You are best positioned to document the unusual difficulties you have faced during the pandemic.

At the same time, it is critical that the university community makes larger adaptations to the post-pandemic environment. Department chairs and program directors need to be informed about the special circumstances of their unit members so that they can accommodate a new normal. The institutional support that was provided at the department level before the pandemic may need to be adapted for the changing circumstances.

In the same way, members of review committees need to consider the extraordinary circumstances that have affected candidates for review and promotion. The AAUP and Oakland have signed a [Letter of Agreement](#) that established the faculty right to delay tenure reviews because of the extenuating problems of the pandemic. We must remember that the pandemic affected each of us differently, and we must respect the judgement of those who felt it necessary to adjust their tenure clocks.

We must also understand that the changes triggered by COVID-19 have been so enduring, units might have to alter their tenure and promotion criteria. As they consider potential changes to review documents, members of the review committees will need to assist units in constructing guidelines for this new university environment.

We can move forward successfully from this pandemic crisis. This recovery will occur the most smoothly if we can all acknowledge how it has transformed our teaching, our scholarship, and our service to the community.

We encourage all members to take this brief survey: [Pandemic Family Care Survey Link](#)

This document was inspired by and modeled on [UMass ADVANCE Documenting Pandemic Impacts: Best Practices](#).