

**Commission on Faculty Affairs
Revisions to Policy on Tenure Clock Extensions
Resolution 2005-06 A**

Approved by CFA:	February 10, 2006 w/ revisions 3-17-06
First Reading at University Council:	April 3, 2006
Approved by University Council:	April 17, 2006
Approved by the President:	April 17, 2006
Approved Board of Visitors:	June 12, 2006
Effective:	Fall 2006

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has had a policy for many years allowing tenure-track (or continued appointment track) faculty members to request an extension of the six-year probationary period in cases where the faculty member's progress was "severely impeded by childbirth, adoption, serious family illness, or other extenuating non-professional circumstances;" and

WHEREAS, probationary period extensions have been granted for these stated reasons, but also other reasons, such as exceptional delays in receiving critical research equipment or laboratory renovations promised as part of a committed start-up package; and

WHEREAS, through the NSF Advance grant, the university is carefully and systematically reevaluating its policies and practices with the goals of helping faculty members achieve a more manageable balance of work and family commitments, and improving recruitment and retention of talented faculty members;

THEREFORE be it resolved, that the existing policy on probationary period extensions for tenure-track (and continued appointment track) faculty members be revised to accomplish several objectives: 1) to reflect a broader set of acceptable justifications, reflecting actual practice; 2) to make stopping the tenure clock AUTOMATIC for new parents, both female and male, to recognize the conflicting demands of having and raising young children while launching a faculty career; and 3) to set a cumulative limit of two tenure clock extensions (two years total).

**Virginia Tech Faculty Handbook
Provisions relating to Tenure-Clock Extension and Family Leave
Proposed Changes in Red**

2.8.2 Probationary Period

The term "probationary period" is applied to the succession of term appointments, which an individual undertakes on a full-time regular faculty appointment, and during which continued evaluation for reappointment and for an eventual tenured appointment takes place. The beginning of the probationary period for faculty members on term appointments is taken as July 1 or August 10 of the calendar year in which their initial full-time appointment begins, depending on whether they are on a calendar-year or academic-year appointment, regardless of the month in which their services are initiated. (The probationary period for new faculty appointed for spring term shall begin the following fall even though the spring contract period officially begins December 25.)

The initial appointment for assistant professors, and for associate professors and professors employed without tenure, is ordinarily for a period of not less than two years. Multiple-year reappointment may be subsequently recommended.

The maximum total period for probationary appointments is six years, **unless an approved extension has been granted**. Decision about tenure, if not made earlier, is made in the sixth year of the probationary appointment. If the tenure decision made in the sixth year is negative, a one-year terminal appointment will be offered.

Only full-time service will count toward the probationary period unless specific exception is made, and only in units of full years. Up to three years of appropriate service at other accredited four-year colleges and universities may be credited toward the six-year probationary period, as specified below.

A faculty member on probationary appointment who wishes to request a leave of absence shall consult with his or her department head or chair about the effect of the leave on the probationary period, taking into account the professional development that the leave promises. The request for leave should address this matter and the provost's approval of the leave request will specify whether the leave will be included in the probationary period.

2.8.2.1 Stopping the Tenure Clock

Current language:

A tenure-track faculty member on probationary appointment whose professional development in a given academic year is severely impeded by childbirth, adoption, serious family illness, or other extenuating non-professional circumstances may request exclusion of the year from the probationary period. Requests for extension of the probationary period should be made in writing in a timely fashion, but no later than one year after the qualifying event, and be approved by the dean and provost. Documentation of the extenuating circumstances or illness may be required prior to approval.

Proposed language:

A one-year probationary period extension shall be *automatically* granted to either parent (or both, if both parents are tenure-track faculty members) in recognition of the demands of caring for a new born child or a child under five newly placed for adoption or foster care. The request should be made within a year of the child's arrival in the family.

An extension of the probationary period may also be approved on a discretionary basis for other extenuating non-professional circumstances that have had a significant impact on the faculty member's productivity, such as a serious personal illness or major illness of a member of the immediate family. In rare cases, extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member's own making may be acceptable justification for a probationary period extension, for example exceptional delays in providing critical equipment, laboratory renovations, or other elements of the committed start-up package essential to establishing a viable research program.

Faculty members who benefit from this policy are expected to fulfill their normal responsibilities during the probationary period extension unless they have been also granted a period of modified duties or unless other arrangements have been made.

Probationary period extensions are granted in one year increments. A cumulative total of two years is normally the maximum probationary period extension for any combination of reasons. Requests should be made within a year of the qualifying event or extenuating circumstance. Exceptions to these limitations may be approved by the provost.

Requests for a probationary period extension should be submitted in writing to the department head. (A form is available on the provost's website.) Approval shall be automatic for new parents. Documentation of medical reasons (other than childbirth/adoption) will be required prior to approval; documentation of other extenuating circumstances may also be required. Approval by the head, dean, and provost are required for probationary period extensions. The faculty member may appeal denial of the request to the next higher level.

It is very important that all individuals and committees participating in tenure reviews understand that any individual who has received a probationary period

extension must be held to the same standard – not a higher or more stringent one - to which other candidates without such an extension are held. This is also true in the case where the candidate's dossier is considered on the original schedule for review. However, in this instance where an approved extension has been granted but not utilized, the tenure review is not considered mandatory and can be conducted again in the subsequent year without penalty. A probationary extension also normally extends the timeframe for each subsequent review and reappointment during the probationary period. For example, an extension granted prior to the 4th year review and reappointment would typically delay that review by one year.

2.15.8.2 Additional Faculty Leave Benefits for Faculty on Regular, Salaried Appointments

(Last paragraph only)

Current language:

A tenure-track faculty member on probationary appointment whose professional development in a given academic year is severely impeded by childbirth, adoption, serious family illness, or other extenuating non-professional circumstances may request exclusion of the year from the probationary period. Requests for extension of the probationary period should be made in writing in a timely fashion, but no later than one year after the qualifying event, and be approved by the dean and provost. Documentation of the extenuating circumstances or illness may be required prior to approval.

Proposed language:

The probationary period for tenure-track faculty members will be automatically extended upon notification for faculty members who are new parents. Probationary period extensions may also be granted for other extenuating personal or family-related circumstances. See section 2.8.2.1 for further information.