

# ACADEMIC SPECIALIST PROMOTION GUIDELINES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

College of Human Medicine

## Introduction

This document sets forth the guidelines for reappointment and promotion of academic specialists in the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine (MSU-CHM). The [Academic Specialist Handbook](#) should be consulted prior to proceeding with the review and recommendation process. Sections 4.8, 5.1 through 6.1.3, 6.4.2, 6.4.3 and Appendix A contain information related to evaluation, reappointment, continuing appointment status, and promotion of academic specialist and are summarized below.

## Initial Appointments

The Academic Specialist Appointment System consists of individuals appointed to one of two ranked levels: senior academic specialist or academic specialist. Appointments are made in units reporting directly or indirectly to the Provost or the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies. Academic specialists may be appointed on a fixed term or continuing basis, full-time or part-time, with either an academic year (nine-month) or an annual (twelve-month) duty assignment. Assignments for all academic specialists involve applicable assigned duties (academic advising/teaching/curriculum development, research, and service/outreach responsibilities) and related professional development activities.

## Continuing Appointment Status

- A. **Academic Specialists** are appointed initially for a probationary period of three years and may be reappointed for an additional probationary period of three years. If an academic specialist is appointed beyond the two probationary periods, continuing appointment status is granted. If at any time during these two probationary periods an academic specialist is promoted to the rank of senior specialist, continuing appointment status is granted.
- B. **Senior Academic Specialists** are normally appointed for a probationary period of two to four years with the option of requesting reappointment at any time prior to the conclusion of the stipulated probationary appointment period. A negative decision on such a request does not preclude consideration for reappointment at the time specified upon appointment. If a senior academic specialist is reappointed beyond the first probationary period, continuing appointment status is granted.

## Fixed Term Appointment Status

- A. **Academic Specialists** are appointed with an end date on an academic year or annual basis or for shorter periods. Generally, repeated fixed term appointments should not be used as a mechanism to by-pass the continuing appointment system. However, positions funded with grant or other non-general funds normally are fixed term in nature.
- B. Fixed Term Specialists are not eligible for the rank of senior academic specialist upon initial appointment.

# Reappointment Recommendations

## Continuing Appointment Status

Academic specialists with probationary appointments undergo the reappointment review process in the year prior to the final year of their appointment. Form C provides the following options:

- Reappoint as academic specialist for probationary period of three years
- Reappoint as academic specialist and award continuing appointment status
- Do not reappoint
- Promote to senior academic specialist and award continuing appointment status

## Fixed Term Appointment Status

In accordance with regular University procedures, unless an explicit written commitment for an additional appointment, fixed term or otherwise, is provided by the unit administrator, the academic specialist cannot expect to be reappointed. For all fixed term (temporary) faculty/academic staff appointments, as stated in the Faculty Handbook, "the University has no obligation to provide reappointment or extension of a fixed term appointment beyond the ending date. If reappointment is made, negotiation of the conditions of reappointment must originate with the administrative unit (department, school, institute, residential college, or other comparable academic unit)." As indicated in the Fixed Term Faculty/Academic Staff Appointment/Reappointment Memorandum – required to be filled out for each fixed term appointment/reappointment – appointment or reappointment on a fixed term basis does not involve any commitment to appointment in any of the continuing academic personnel appointment systems, which require separate and distinct procedures.

Units are required to provide academic specialists with fixed term appointments a notice about reappointment or the likelihood of reappointment three months prior to the end date of the appointment.

## Promotion Recommendations

In addition to excellence in performance that warrants reappointment and/or continuing appointment status, a small number of academic specialists may achieve a level of distinction to justify promotion to the rank of senior academic specialist.

## Continuing Appointment Status

Academic specialists may be promoted to senior academic specialist at the time they are awarded continuing appointment status, or to academic specialists who are already on the continuing status. Academic specialists reappointed to a second probationary period may not be promoted to senior academic specialist until they are awarded continuing status. The following options are listed on Form C:

- Promote to Senior Academic Specialist (if appointed with continuing status)
- Promote to Senior Academic Specialist and award continuing status

## Fixed Term Appointment Status

Senior academic specialist designation is limited to academic specialists with fixed term appointments who have completed 60+ FTE service months. In addition, they are subject to the same standard and criteria applicable to individuals in the continuing appointment system. The following option is listed on Form C:

- Promote to Senior Academic Specialist (if appointed with fixed term status)  
NOTE: Fixed term Academic Specialists can be promoted only to Fixed term Senior Academic Specialist.

## Review Period and Time in Position for Promotion

The basis for a promotion recommendation is derived from a significantly long and sustained period of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with the recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally. Such recognition is to be based on external peer review involving evaluation of performance in one or more of the assigned functional areas: teaching/advising/curriculum development, research, public service/outreach.

## Criteria for Reappointment, Continuing Status and Promotion

Reappointment of the academic specialist, including the award of continuing appointment status and/or promotion to the rank of senior academic specialist, must be based on meritorious performance, not merely time spent in the position. General characteristics and responsibilities are included in the Academic Specialist Handbook specific to the functional areas. However, the underlying premise is that individuals appointed as academic specialists are professionals dedicated to the performance of their responsibilities, the advancement of the University and maintaining Michigan State University as a premier land-grant, AAU University. The listing of criteria is not intended to be exhaustive. Nor would a single individual necessarily be measured by all the criteria related to a given functional group, even if the duties of that individual fell only within one functional area. Rather, the individual would be evaluated according to the subset of criteria from each functional area involved that is appropriate to the position.

In addition to meeting the basic expectations in the functional area(s) assigned (as outlined in the position descriptions), the following are CHM reappointment, continuing status, and promotion criteria:

### TEACHING

Reappointment (fixed and continuing status): High-quality and improving teaching as demonstrated by student evaluations (teaching evaluations must be collected for every class taught), in-class peer evaluation, and evaluation of the teaching portfolio, including evidence of student learning. Successful professional development related to teaching and higher education. Engagement with teaching and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status (continuing status): Continued outstanding performance in meeting expectations as outlined under reappointment. In addition, successful, growing engagement and leadership related to broader teaching and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist (fixed and continuing status): Sustained longitudinal track record of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with outstanding teaching as demonstrated by student evaluations (teaching evaluations must be collected for every class taught), in-class peer evaluation, and evaluation of the teaching portfolio, including evidence of student learning. Outstanding leadership and impact related to teaching and educational issues through recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

### ADVISING

Reappointment (fixed and continuing status): High-quality and improving student advising as demonstrated by evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and staff served by the advisor. Demonstrated understanding of university policies, procedures and curriculum as it relates to advisor's responsibilities. Successful professional development related to advising and higher education. Engagement in advising and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status (continuing status): Continued outstanding performance in meeting expectations as outlined under reappointment. In addition, successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader advising and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Specialist (fixed and continuing status): Sustained longitudinal track record of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with outstanding student advising as demonstrated by evaluation and feedback from students, faculty and staff served by the advisor. Demonstrated contributions to the evaluation and revision of department policies, procedures and curriculum. Outstanding leadership and impact related to broader advising and educational issues through recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

## CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Reappointment as Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): High-quality and improving development of curricula and curricular materials (e.g., assessments) as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the curricula, implementation of the curricula, and evidence of student learning. Successful professional development related to curriculum development and higher education. Engagement with broader curriculum development and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status as Academic Specialist (continuing status): Continued outstanding performance in meeting expectations as outlined under reappointment. In addition, successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader curriculum development and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): Sustained period of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with outstanding development of curricula and curricular materials as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the curricula, implementation of the curricula, and evidence of student learning. Outstanding leadership and impact related to broader curriculum development and educational issues through recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

## SERVICE/OUTREACH

Reappointment as Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): High-quality and improving engagement with and contributions to service and outreach activities as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the service or outreach activities assigned and impact on the clientele for the activities. Successful professional development related to service/outreach and higher education. Engagement with broader service/outreach and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing Status as Academic Specialist (continuing status): Continued outstanding performance in meeting expectations as outlined under reappointment. In addition, successful and growing engagement and leadership related to broader service/outreach and educational issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): Sustained period of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with outstanding engagement with and contributions to service and outreach activities as demonstrated by evaluation of the written materials related to the service or outreach activities assigned and impact on the clientele for the activities. Outstanding leadership and impact related to engagement with broader service/outreach and educational issues through recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

## RESEARCH

Reappointment as Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): High-quality and improving performance of the research activities assigned, as demonstrated by publications, research grants, or written evaluation from the clientele of research services, as appropriate. Successful professional development related to the research activities of the position. Engagement with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues within the university and beyond.

Granting of Continuing as Academic Specialist (continuing status): Continued outstanding performance in meeting expectations as outlined under reappointment. In addition, successful and growing engagement and leadership with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues within the university and beyond.

Promotion to Senior Academic Specialist (fixed and continuing status): Sustained period of excellence in the performance of assigned duties, together with outstanding performance of the research activities assigned, as demonstrated by publications, research grants, or written evaluation from the clientele of research services, as appropriate. Outstanding leadership and impact related to engagement with broader research-related activities, programs, and issues through recognition by peers and colleagues both within the University and regionally, nationally, and internationally.

## Reappointment and Promotion Review Process and Procedures

Reappointment, including the award of continuing appointment status and promotion to the rank of senior academic specialist, is predicated on the exemplary performance of assigned duties, professional development, excellence in scholarly activity, leadership and contributions to the institution.

- Consistent with the reappointment/promotion timetable, individuals who believe they have developed an appropriate record of activity and competence may assemble a compendium of scholarly achievements and submit such documentation to support consideration for reappointment or promotion. Such documentation may consist of evidence to substantiate excellence in relevant scholarly activities, i.e., course/curriculum development, teaching, publications, public service/outreach, academic advising, grants, creativity in program development and leadership in other areas related to assigned duties.
- No individual specialist is required to perform or excel in all functional areas. The initial or subsequent appointment description defines the basic area(s) to which the individual should devote energy and attention in career progression.
  - When seeking the award of continuing status, specialists must meet the criteria for the award of continuing status in their primary area of focus (likely also the functional area in their title), and the reappointment criteria for other functional areas listed on the Specialist Position Description.
  - When seeking promotion, specialists must meet the criteria for promotion to senior specialist in their primary area of focus (likely also the functional area in their title), and the reappointment criteria for other functional areas listed on the Specialist Position Description.
- The unit review committee for academic specialist reappointment or promotion should be provided with guidelines and directed to determine objectively the level of accomplishment and excellence in the relevant academic specialist functional area(s) and specific duty assignments. Review committees should evaluate academic specialists against criteria for reappointment/promotion rather than comparing to other academic specialists being reviewed.
- Recommendations of the review committee are forwarded to the appropriate academic unit administrator. The recommendation of the academic unit administrator is forwarded for subsequent review and action by the relevant major academic unit administrator (usually the dean) and by the Office of the Provost.
- Upon approval by the provost, the academic specialist will be notified of the recommended action.

# Department Review Committee Composition and Procedure

## Committee Composition

A departmental review committee is established to advise the chairperson about the reappointment, award of continuing appointments status, or promotion of the academic specialist. The review committee is composed of individuals knowledgeable about the position under review and the Academic Specialist Appointment System and should include at least one academic specialist. An academic specialist from outside the unit can be appointed, if necessary, with a voice but no vote. The committee may also include faculty, members of other academic personnel systems, or University support staff members.

## Procedure

1. The chairperson shall provide the departmental review committee with guidelines consistent with the Academic Specialist Handbook and direct the review committee to determine objectively the level of accomplishment and excellence in the relevant academic specialist functional area(s) and duty assignments specified in the Specialist Position Description form.
2. The academic specialist under review is provided an opportunity to confer with the review committee before it provides advice to the chairperson regarding promotion to senior academic specialist.
3. Recommendations of the department review committee are forwarded to the appropriate academic unit administrator.
4. In addition to the review committee's advice, the chairperson may also consult with administrative staff, faculty, students, and/or other qualified individuals inside or outside the unit regarding the reappointment review. The academic specialist should be informed of those individuals from whom the unit administrator is requesting advice; the academic specialist is not informed of those individuals who provide letters of evaluation, unless stipulated by unit policy. An assessment is made of the availability of position funds and/or changes in the needs of the department or unit which may result in the need for non-reappointment. Reappointment or award of continuing status must promote the objectives of improving academic strength and quality.
5. The recommendation of the academic unit administrator is forwarded to the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development (FAD) for subsequent review and action at the college level. Materials are due to FAD by March 1.

## Review Packet

The candidate's review packet will include the following and must be under 500 pages:

- Form C: ACADEMIC SPECIALIST RECOMMENDATION FOR REAPPOINTMENT, PROMOTION OR AWARD OF CONTINUING APPOINTMENT STATUS
- Specialist Position Description
- Reflective Essay
- Curriculum Vitae
- External Review Letters, where required
- Annual Review Letters
- Academic Portfolio – A representative sample of scholarly work and evidence of excellence in performing assigned duties in each relevant area of review:
  - INSTRUCTION: Evidence of contributions to teaching and instructional activities. Include use and effectiveness of evidence-based teaching strategies and achievement of student learning; evidence of promoting an appropriate climate of diversity and intellectual honesty in instructional settings; innovation and leadership in teaching/learning methods; summary of evidence of recognition from students, peers, faculty, and others within and outside MSU.
  - ADVISING: Evidence of academic advising. Include advising, recruitment and retention of students; evidence of commitment to and effectiveness in promoting diversity and intellectual honesty; evidence of a leadership role in the advising profession; summary of evidence of recognition by students, peers, faculty and others within and outside MSU.

- CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: Evidence of curriculum planning and development. Include professional contributions and evidence of leadership; commitment to and effectiveness in promoting diversity and intellectual honesty; summary of evidence of recognition of peers, faculty and others within and outside MSU.
- SERVICE/OUTREACH: Evidence of public service/outreach activities. Include delivery of educational and technical information, expertise and services to individuals, business, industry, government, educational institutions or other organizations such as galleries, museums, libraries; evidence of leadership; promotion of an appropriate climate for diversity and intellectual honesty in service/outreach settings; a summary of evidence of recognition by clients, peers, faculty and others within and outside MSU.
- RESEARCH: Evidence of contributions to research. Include research techniques; support of others in research endeavors; advancement of knowledge, public benefit, economic development; promotion of appropriate climate for creativity, diversity and intellectual honesty in the research setting; summary of evidence of recognition of peers, faculty and others within and outside MSU.
- OTHER: Activity in this category may include institutional service, administrative support, and/or administrative leadership. Evidence of contributions to the unit, college, or university overall, or to constituent populations served; stewardship of resources; effective supervision, mentoring and career development; promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion in the context of the service or leadership role.

## Letters of Reference

Departments must follow the guidelines for requesting letters and confidentiality outlined in the university principles for tenure external letters of reference: [https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/external\\_ref-letters.html](https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/external_ref-letters.html).

External letters help to validate the specialist's contribution to the profession. Also, continuing status or promotion to Senior Academic Specialist should be granted to individuals whose work has made an impact beyond the department and their scholarship has some "reach." External letters are required for award of continuing status and promotion to senior academic specialist.

## Award of Continuing Status

- Three to six external letters
- External letters should be external to the university. If the specialist being reviewed does not have an "external facing" role, then letters from individuals external to the department can be accepted.

## Academic Specialist to Senior Academic Specialist

- Three to six external letters
- External letters should be external to the university. If the specialist being reviewed does not have an "external facing" role, then letters from individuals external to the department can be accepted.

## References

The Academic Specialist Handbook (e.g., <https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/academic-specialist-handbook/index.html>, accessed August 19, 2021) and Review of Academic Specialist Memo (e.g., dated November 6, 2020) were referenced in the creation of this policy.

## Endorsement

Endorsed by the College of Human Medicine College Advisory Committee on October 18, 2021.