

Post-Tenure Review

Rehabilitation or Enrichment?



by Joan North

"I've been tenured since 1974 and this is my first review since then. As a male, I feel like somebody is trying to pick a fight and I have to get ready to fight back."

"It really wasn't handled very well. Some people don't want to hear the criticisms so they don't attend the group. The group unloads and then has to send a representative to tell the faculty member what happened. And then the representative doesn't relay any of the bad stuff."

"I passed. "

These are the voices not of slackers but of productive, valued faculty members who suddenly find themselves in a strange setting. "What's the point of these evaluations? What have I done wrong?" they want to know. Sure, we can assure them that they are simply being held accountable, as our boards have mandated, and that the post-tenure review process has nothing to do with them personally, and it won't take much time. But the trenches-truth as I see it is that summative post-tenure review is producing more negative than positive outcomes.

Some form of post-tenure review is in operation at approximately 60% of campuses with tenure. So many of us do not have a choice about participating. But we may have a choice about how post-tenure review is accomplished and how these evaluations can work for the best.

There are many good reasons for campuses to incorporate developmental evaluations of senior professors, and there are good reasons to have a summative process when a problem occurs. But most of the recent spate of post-tenure review requirements are hybrids of summative and developmental processes, in that the reviews are targeted at every tenured faculty member, like developmental evaluations, but contain summative consequences. Herein lies the snag.

Purposes and Triggers

On the basis of research by Christine Licata and Joseph Morreale (*Post-Tenure Review: Policies, Practices, Precautions, AAHE, 1997*), post-tenure review can be categorized by its purpose as either developmental or summative and by what precipitates the review - time schedule or poor performance.

Putting these variables together reveals four different approaches to post-tenure review (see graph): the "Correction Type," which is purely summative; the "Transition Type" and the "Evolution Type," which are

Transition I Type (Developmental)

The Transition Type of post-tenure review is triggered by something other than poor performance and provides a developmental experience. As departments consider

purely developmental; and the "Inspection Type," in which summative and developmental are mixed.

Trigger	Purpose	
	Summative	Developmental
Performance	Correction Type	Transition Type
Time	Inspection Type (Summative/Developmental)	Evolution Type

Correction Type (Summative)

With the Correction Type of evaluation, evidence of an individual's poor performance surfaces, often through an annual review, and triggers a formal evaluation that could lead to formal sanctions. There is no ambiguity about the serious, consequential nature of the review. The procedures are carefully laid out with a primary eye to due process and legal ramifications.

Methods of finding and presenting evidence of poor performance vary. Some campuses took for several years of little or no merit increase. Arizona State University's "enhanced review" is triggered either by an overall unsatisfactory rating on the annual departmental performance review or by a program review that suggests a faculty member is not contributing, as confirmed by the department's personnel committee. At Kansas State University, "chronic low achievement" is identified by the department during annual reviews. Seattle Pacific University requires a summative review when the faculty status committee receives a request for such a review from the faculty member, the school dean, two full-time faculty members, or the dean of faculty.

Identification and remediation of poor performance is a long-standing pillar of personnel management and represents the institution's responsibility to identify and correct serious problems. It is the rare campus that does not have this type of summative procedure in place. Because of the delicate nature of the undertaking, it is unlikely that the general public or even the collective campus is well versed on how poor performance problems are solved, thereby leading to calls for post-tenure review.

new ways to conceptualize faculty roles and rewards, this approach can provide a snapshot of departmental interests. The Transition Type of review might also help a department assess how to make changes - in anticipation of a clump of retirements or for serious changes in departmental funding, for example. Sometimes a faculty member would simply like to share his or her professional goals with colleagues. The assumption is that there may be occasions when sharing professional progress is useful to the department or the individual or both.

The Transition Type is the least-used kind of post-tenure review, but one that has potential.

Inspection Type (Summative/ Developmental)

The most common approach to post-tenure review is the Inspection Type, in which an evaluation is required of all tenured faculty every so often, regardless of achievement. While there is a desire for all participants to improve, the consequential teeth inherent in this approach make it clear that its primary purpose is to ferret out the laggards. The principle of "equal treatment" seems to tower over the principle of merit, since all tenured faculty must be measured against minimum expectations, usually in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. Like the Correction Type, explicit sanctions are available if deficiencies are not remedied.

Interestingly, many post-tenure review programs of the Inspection Type profess to be developmental and downplay their summative soul. But when a university's review committee looks for satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance, with sanctions for poor performance, it is hard to disguise the summative nature.

	<u>Developmental Evaluation</u>	<u>Summative Evaluation</u>
Purposes	push strengths	catch weaknesses
Approaches	encourage everyone	uncover deadwood
Procedures	collegial	legal
Evidence	reflections and individual goals within dept. contest	proof that you meet criteria
Outcome	individual or dept. development plan	none, unless improvement plan is required

At the pre-tenure level, faculty understand that the primary purpose of evaluation is summative, with possible negative consequences. At the post-tenure

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level, it can be confusing if the purpose can swing from developmental to summative, depending on what turns up. In the hybrid Inspection Type of review, the purposes, approaches, procedures, participants, and evidence are geared to a summative evaluation, but the campus assures the faculty that only the guilty will be required to improve.

The Inspection Type is the most dangerous and least productive approach to post-tenure review, despite its widespread use. It is inefficient. Its primary focus is not the growth and development of all faculty but the identification of poor performers, for which there are other triggered, less costly, less time-consuming mechanisms. Poor performance has a way of making itself known, of drawing attention to itself; it does not require sleuth skills.

An Inspection Type of review ruins the opportunity for faculty to experience a positive, developmental, effective evaluation. When all efforts are focused on finding problems there is neither time, nor interest, nor need to create a developmental evaluation.

In addition, the Inspection Type of review is ineffective. There are no guarantees that the evaluation process will identify poor performers, since reviewers may let such faculty off the hook out of compassion. More important, this approach may diminish unit effectiveness with hard feelings, fear, and defensiveness that discourages collaboration and stifles individual renewal. This kind of evaluation is too often approached with trepidation, even by high-performing faculty members. The negative impact of the unintended outcomes for the many who have to participate far outweighs the benefit of identifying the few who are caught below the performance line. The comments at the beginning of this article grew from this type of evaluation.

problems
there is neither time, nor interest, nor need to create a developmental evaluation. Most faculty members have experienced only one model of evaluation in their careers: the summative evaluations that were a part of tenure and promotion. Summative evaluations are rightfully a part of tenure and promotion, since the institution is still evaluating the individual against departmental and campus criteria. But good human resource management suggests that senior personnel should not be evaluated with the same template used for trainees.

Bill Tierney, an observer of higher education culture, put it this way in a 1997 issue of *Academe*: "...organizational literature consistently points out that the path to high performance, total quality, and continuous improvement is through the encouragement of employees, not through the bureaucratic implementation of mechanisms to monitor them. If we seek to mimic the business world, why develop policies that promote job insecurity and lower morale?"

Evolution Type (Developmental)

The Evolution Type occurs on a regular basis for all tenured faculty and is oriented to the individual's unfolding growth and development, often in connection with the unfolding needs and opportunities of the department. Ithaca College uses this type of review. The assumption is that everyone benefits from periodically taking stock of accomplishments, reflecting on current and future directions, and connecting those directions with departmental challenges. Concerns about the individual's performance are not the focus of the review, but if concerns surface they are discussed within the context of departmental needs and do not lead to sanctions. Professional-development plans are often integral, usually with financial and other support from the department.

A developmental approach to post-tenure review, seldom found among mandated approaches, offers a number of positive outcomes for the individual and for the department. First, it reinforces natural development cycles. The Evolution approach assumes that it is our life's work to grow and develop; the evaluation covers a process common to all; it is not solely for catching bad behavior.

The Evolution approach celebrates individual differences within a unit context, since the beginning point is the individual rather than the external criteria. Evaluation processes that begin with standard criteria force unnecessary uniformity and promote negative feelings about not being a superperson in all categories. With growing recognition that a wider spread of faculty roles and rewards increases satisfaction and productivity,

developmental approaches. Professionals in faculty development may be helpful in this process. Second, the unit has to be assured that there is a mechanism in place to identify and address any serious performance problems - a summative mechanism. This mechanism may never have to be used partly because the developmental process encourages tenured faculty in a way that facilitates change before serious problems

building a departmental "quilt" becomes even more important.

The Evolution Type of review encourages change without fear for future employment. A developmental approach assumes that changes in behavior can and do occur. People are more likely to consider changes because there is no need to be defensive or to fear failure or negative repercussions. We are apt to accomplish more change than with the summative approach, where sanctions force the individual to accomplish only minimum outcomes. At my college, the College of Professional Studies, we offer grants for ideas or projects that emerge from post-tenure review.

Finally, the Evolution approach promotes departmental cohesion and clarity of purpose. When all members of a department participate, their sharing can provide the information necessary for a meta-view of the department's evolution, revealing gaps that current or future members might fill, opportunities for collaboration, or even possible redefinition of the department. Experience suggests that too often this kind of sharing is sporadic and certainly not systematic enough to draw a department-wide mosaic. By looking as much into the future as into the past, evaluation becomes more formative.

Going Developmental

With so many campuses implementing Inspection Type post-tenure review one may wonder how to switch to developmental evaluation. It may not be difficult.

Once a department, college, or university decides to use developmental post-tenure review, there are two general decisions to make. One is how to organize a developmental experience (Or, more likely, how to reorganize the current summative experience into a developmental one). This will require some study and questioning of assumptions, since most faculty members will not have had experience with

occur.

Future and Creativity

Probably not since the 1960s, with its growth in opportunities, audiences, and funding, has there been such a demand for change in academia. Although technology is frequently identified as the catalyst, the broader shift stems from the questions "What is learning?" "What role does teaching play?" and "Who owns the teaching function?" At this crucial time in our history, we need faculty and staff who can be creative, take risks, experiment, and challenge assumptions. Such behavior is not likely to occur in a system that requires a summative evaluation of its senior staff every three to five years. To be light-footed requires a strong supportive context that maximizes growth and minimizes punishment, a context embodied in evaluation systems that are developmental with a triggered process to handle exceptional cases. Let's not weigh down that light foot or worse, shoot it.

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