



## Department Head, Chair or School Director Appointment and Review

### No. 6100

**Policy Effective Date:**  
7/16/1990

**Last Revision Date:**  
1/26/2024

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Faculty

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### 1.0 Purpose

This policy provides guidelines about the role, responsibilities, appointment, and evaluation of department heads, chairs, and school directors. These guidelines apply to all academic departments. It also interprets and implements the guidelines in the *Faculty Handbook*.

### 2.0 Policy

Departments are under the supervision of a department head, chair, or school director who is responsible to the dean of the college. Departments, schools, and colleges are responsible for developing and maintaining expectations, guidelines, and procedures for review of department heads, chairs, or school directors.

Department heads, chairs, or school directors serve for fixed-length terms, specified by the department, school, or college. Heads, chairs, and school directors are appointed for terms of no longer than five years. They may be reappointed for additional terms. The length of term and procedures for renewal are to be decided by the college dean in consultation with the departmental or school faculty taking into consideration any cycle of periodic departmental reviews that may be in the college's procedures.

In certain cases, some responsibilities may be delegated to program chairs or directors of specific disciplines within the department or school. In such instances and depending on the responsibility and authority they are granted, it may be appropriate to develop parallel procedures adopted by the college for appointment, reappointment, and periodic review of program directors providing leadership within an academic department or school.

### 2.1 Role and Responsibilities

The department head, chair, or school director has primary administrative responsibility for all personnel, including recruitment of new faculty members, as well as curriculum and academic programs, budget, equipment, and facility matters related to the department or school. As the department or school's academic leader, the individual is responsible for the character and quality of the department's academic programs in their purview. The head, chair, or school director is responsible to the faculty of the department or school, the dean of the college and the university. In this capacity, they serve as an explicator and advocate for the department or school and are responsible for understanding and explaining college and university goals, objectives, decisions, and circumstances.

### 2.2 Appointment of Department Heads, Chairs or School Directors

The head, chair, or school director shall be recommended for appointment by the dean, but only after extensive consultation with the department or school faculty. It should, in effect, be a joint process. The executive vice president and provost or the university president will make or authorize the appointment.



## 2.3 Reappointment

A comprehensive evaluation shall precede any reappointment of an individual as head, chair, or school director. A head, chair, or school director may serve a series of terms if the individual's performance is demonstrably satisfactory, and the dean recommends continuation.

A department head, chair, or school director may decline reappointment without prejudice. The dean, with the approval of the executive vice president and provost, may remove a department head, chair, or school director at any time for good reason.

## 2.4 Evaluation of Department Heads, Chairs, and School Directors

Heads, chairs, or school directors shall be evaluated annually by the dean. A periodic review shall be conducted by the department during the last year of the appointment (if reappointment is a possibility), or at least every five years. The purpose of the comprehensive, periodic review is to support the success of the university's academic units by providing developmental feedback to promote fair and effective academic leadership. See sections 3.2 and 3.3.

## 2.5 Leaves

Because department or division administrators are usually expected to maintain their professional faculty careers, they will be eligible for periodic Study-Research leaves or Research Assignments similar to full-time faculty. At the end of the individual's administrative service, the University may grant a Study-Research leave or Research Assignment to enable the person to resume effectively a full-time faculty career--unless the individual has taken leave within the last several years.

## 2.6 Compensation

It is reasonable to provide department heads, chairs, or school directors with compensation in recognition of the considerable responsibility they assume. While the stipends may differ from one department to another, depending, for example, on the size of the department and on the scale and complexity of the responsibility, there should be a common set of guidelines for determining the assignment compensation.

Department heads, chairs, and school directors are typically appointed on a calendar-year (CY) basis. Upon completion of appointment and return to the faculty, the calendar-year appointment will be converted to an academic-year (AY) appointment in those departments and schools where academic-year appointments are the standard. The administrative compensation, if provided at the time of appointment, is removed, and/or the salary is adjusted to reflect the change in responsibilities.

## 2.7 Recognition

The department head, chair, or school director is an important academic leader. That person works directly with faculty and students and is responsible for academic programs. Duties associated with serving as head, chair, or school director shall be recognized in the promotion and tenure process.



## 3.0 Procedures

### 3.1 Appointment of Department Administrators

After consulting with the department and/or school faculty, the college dean usually establishes a search committee. The committee consists mainly of department and/or school faculty. The committee conducts the search according to department, college, and university policies, and makes recommendations to the dean. If the dean's nomination for appointment or reappointment differs from the faculty's recommendation, then the dean must provide an explanation of the decision to the faculty.

### 3.2 Reappointment

A comprehensive evaluation shall precede any reappointment of a head, chair, or school director. The evaluation is administered by the department and/or school faculty following department or school and college guidelines. The results of the evaluation are communicated to the faculty by the dean as described in section 3.3 and should significantly influence the dean's recommendation. Upon a satisfactory evaluation, the dean may recommend to executive vice president and provost the reappointment or continuation of the department head, chair, or school director.

### 3.3 Periodic Evaluation of Department Administrators

In consultation with the faculty, each college will adopt general guidelines and procedures for conducting periodic reviews. Reviews are conducted with the general principles below:

- **Frequency:** When reappointment is a possibility, reviews of department heads, chairs or school directors are conducted during the final year of the term or at least every five years. A review may be initiated at any time by the dean and/or at the request of at least one-third of the tenure-track faculty in the department or school.
- **Composition of Review Committee:** The review should be conducted by a small group of faculty members selected by the dean in accordance with college procedures. The majority of the review committee's members are tenured faculty members, with other members of the committee appropriately representing the pre-tenure and non-tenure-track faculty and staff of the department, selected from among recommendations prepared by the faculty. Recommendations may be developed through special departmental or school election, through membership on a relevant standing committee in the department or school, or through other methods agreed upon in advance in consultation with the departmental or school faculty. One or more members of the review committee may be from outside the department or school and/or external to the university, in the case where involvement with external constituencies is an important aspect of the head, chair or school director's role. One or more staff members may be selected for participation on the committee in accordance with college procedures. For the departments participating in Agency 229 programs, it may be appropriate to include an extension agent on the committee. The committee is expected to work in close consultation with the dean.
- **Nature of the Review:** The evaluation is developmental, as well as summative; the goal of the review is to support the head, chair, or school director and guide the department or school's development.
- **Participation in the Review:** The review committee is expected to seek input from all appropriate faculty members (tenured and tenure-track, continued appointment and continued appointment track, non-tenure track instructional faculty, research faculty A/P faculty, Extension faculty), departmental and/or school



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staff, and representative students. Where appropriate, faculty and administrators and other appropriate constituents from outside the department, school or college should be invited to provide feedback.

- **Length of Review:** To avoid undue disruption of the academic unit and ongoing responsibilities of the head, chair, school director, and review committee members, the review should take no longer than four months from inception to final report.
- **Report of Findings:** The review committee reports its findings only to the dean and the dean communicates the results to the department head, chair or school director. A summary is shared with the department and/or school. The review committee and the dean together determine how the results will be communicated to the department by the dean.

### 4.0 Definitions

### 5.0 References

[Virginia Tech Faculty Handbook](#)

### 6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved July 16, 1990 by Senior Vice President and Provost, E. Fred Carlisle.

- Revision 1  
Sentenced added to last paragraph of Sec. 2.0 to define how the length of a term will be determined.  
Approved January 11, 1991 by Senior Vice President and Provost, E. Fred Carlisle.
- Revision 2
  - Deleted references to "divisions" and division "directors."
  - Added general guidelines for conduct of periodic evaluations at the request of the Faculty Senate.Approved October 16, 1998 by Senior Vice President and Provost, Peggy S. Meszaros.
- Revision 3  
Updated April 19, 2002 to reflect change in Provost's position title.
- Revision 4  
Updated to reflect correct position titles, include "school director", and align with faculty handbook language.  
Approved January 26, 2024 by Executive Vice President and Provost, Cyril R. Clarke.