



**East Tennessee State University  
James H. Quillen College of Medicine**

**Flexible Track Policy and Procedures**

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## **I. Definition of the Flexible Track**

Flexible track are appointments of faculty who serve as clinical educators and basic science researchers in the medical school. Flexible-track appointments are (a) full-time, non-tenurable appointments for which applicants must meet tenure-track eligibility, (b) are non-tenurable appointments for a fixed term of one to three years, (c) can be extended annually for an additional year, (d) permit promotion in rank, and (e) permit conversion of the appointment to tenure track at any time prior to but no later than the expiration of the first three-year term, depending on funding availability and faculty performance. In instances where the appointment is converted to tenure-track, the three years served in the flexible-track appointment may be credited toward the individual's probationary status.

## **II. Goals of the Flexible Track**

- a. To recruit faculty with special talents when uncertain whether they meet criteria for tenure track.
- b. To recruit faculty who have significant and specific focus on two of the three main academic areas: teaching, service and research.
- c. To recruit a broader faculty base for the College of Medicine.
- d. To recruit and retain faculty with special talents who do not wish to pursue tenure but desire a certain degree of career stability.

## **III. General Guidelines for the Flexible Track**

- a. Appointment to the flexible track requires a faculty member to concentrate only on two of the three main academic areas (teaching, clinical and other service, and research/scholarly productivity). It requires the faculty member to be at least excellent in one area and good in the other.
- b. The minimum time devoted to either area by a flexible track faculty member should be 20 percent (equivalent to one day per week). Appropriate resources should be allocated to achieve these goals.

- c. Time and resources should be guaranteed and protected so there is accountability between the faculty member, the Chair and the University.
- d. Flexible track faculty will have all rights, opportunities, and responsibilities as those on tenure track, with the exception of voting on tenure decisions.
- e. Flexible track faculty are reviewed annually through the FAP/FAR/FAE process. They should report on all three areas of academic activity but should only be evaluated on their selected two areas of concentration except in the first three years (see V.b).
- f. The flexible track position guarantees the faculty member's appointment with a rolling contract for up to three years hence. If the department decides not to renew that faculty member at his or her annual review, then the faculty member has up to two years' notice for his or her remaining time at ETSU.
- g. Faculty may request to transfer from flexible to tenure track, if the individual gives promise of meeting tenure track requirements (excellence in two of the three areas and good performance in the remaining area).
- h. Faculty may switch to a tenure track position only within the first three years of the initial appointment.
- i. The years served in the flexible track appointment (three years or less) may be credited toward the individual's probationary status.
- j. During the guaranteed period, the faculty member cannot be replaced by another person to do the same job, except for health concerns or other mitigating factors.
- k. Individuals recruited into the tenure track may convert to the flexible track before their third year of eligibility on the tenure track. Once in the flexible track, they may not apply for conversion back to the tenure track. Their position is not required to be backed by a tenure track line. Conversions will not be allowed in the fourth or fifth year of eligibility.
- l. At the end of year three if the contract is not terminated, the faculty member must convert to either a tenure track position following procedures outlined within this document or convert to a clinical or research track position. Promotion and/or tenure procedures outlined in those track will be applicable.

#### **IV. Procedures for Searches, Appointments, and Contracts**

##### **a. Search**

1. Prior to the initiation of a search, funding for the position will be identified by the Chair in consultation with the Dean's Office and/or the Office of Finance and Administration.
2. A full search and full EEOC procedures will be conducted for flexible track searches, just as for tenure track position.
3. A tenure track position must be available for conversion within the first three-year cycle of the flexible track faculty's contract.
4. The acknowledgment letter to applicants will include this document, which describes the type of appointment and outlines the process for extension and conversion to a tenure track position.

##### **b. Employment Contracts**

1. Employment contracts for flexible track faculty will be prepared by the Office of Finance and Administration.
2. Conditions for MEAC contracts apply for flexible track faculty in clinical disciplines as they do for tenure track faculty, including those pertaining to restrictive covenants.
3. Contracts should be tailored to meet the needs, duties, and responsibilities of individual faculty members' roles, e.g., clinical faculty must be licensed and appropriately credentialed to practice clinical medicine, researchers must not face legal/ethical barriers to research, etc.
4. The title of flexible track faculty will be identical to those of tenure track (instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor); only the contract will be different.

##### **c. Contract Extensions**

1. Six months prior to the contract extension date, the Office of Finance and Administration will send notices of flexible track contracts eligible for Extension to Chairs and Human Resources.
2. For contract extensions, chairs will process the appropriate reappointment forms through the Office of Finance and Administration. Extensions should be submitted a minimum of 30 days prior to the extension date of that contract.

3. Contract extensions for flexible track positions will be prepared and distributed by the Office of Finance and Administration.
  4. At the end of the second year, the Office of Academic Affairs will notify the Chair that, within 12 months, a decision must be made to either move a flexible track faculty member to a tenure track position or continue the flexible track appointment without further option of moving into a tenure track. The decision of the Chair and faculty member must be in writing and be signed by both parties. If an agreement cannot be reached, the faculty member may initiate the appeals process. In the absence of a formal petition to move the faculty member to a tenure track position by the end of the third year, the faculty member will remain in the flexible track position thereafter.
  5. If the faculty member's contract is not converted to a tenure track contract, the available tenure track position associated with his or her flexible track position is then released. The department is responsible for securing available funds for continuation of the salary support for the position.
  6. Part-time contracts, down to 50 percent time, are allowable as with tenure track, as negotiated between the faculty member and the Department Chair. (However, see IV. j.) (Note: If an individual is less than 100 percent time, he/she will receive a prorated share of vacation, sick leave, and the normal retirement based upon his/her salary. He/she is not eligible for health insurance or any other benefits from the university if he/she is less than 80 percent time.)
- d. Termination
1. Criteria for termination and non-Extension are governed by University guidelines.
  2. The appeal process for termination is the same as for other University faculty and employees.

## **V. Procedures for Conversion to the Tenure Track**

- a. Application for conversion to the tenure track may take place any time within the first three-year contract period. A minimum of 180 days prior to the end of the flexible track contract is required to allow time for appropriate processing through the Tennessee Board of Regents.
- b. Flexible track faculty must meet criteria for tenure track and must have documented potential (excellence in one area and potential in other two) in three academic areas.
- c. The application is initiated either by the Chair or the faculty member.

- d. Departmental faculty may serve in an advisory role to the Chair on applications for conversion to tenure track by individual faculty.
- e. The conversion request is then forwarded to the Dean with documentation including the FAP/FAR/FAEs, the Department Chair's review.
- f. The decision for conversion to tenure track is made by the Dean. The Dean can appoint a specially called committee for the review of any tenure track application by flexible track faculty. The recommendations and votes made by the Department Chair and the Departmental faculty are considered in the decision making process.
- g. The appeals process for flexible track faculty facing conversion to the tenure track is the same as that for tenure track faculty facing tenure decisions.
- h. The decision process for conversion to tenure track moves up to the Dean regardless of decisions at previous level.
- i. The flexible track faculty member will be notified in writing of decisions at each level/step of the process.
- j. Requests for conversation from the flexible track to a tenure track contract must occur within the first three years of the faculty member's employment even if all or part of the three years is part time (e.g., a faculty member whose contract is 50 percent time does not have six years to apply for conversation).

## **VI. Procedures for Evaluation and Promotion**

- a. A flexible track faculty member cannot be eligible to apply for promotion unless a firm decision is made on whether he or she is to stay in the flexible track or will apply for conversion to the tenure track.
- b. Flexible track faculty members must complete full FAP/FAR/FAE's for evaluation. The Department Chair must address all three academic areas in his or her annual review/evaluation for the first three years. Subsequently, the Department Chair's review will only address the two negotiated academic areas for that faculty member. This procedure will allow for adequate documentation for potential requests for a switch to the tenure track as well as long-term evaluation for promotion within the flexible track.
- c. The criteria for promotion within the flexible track requires excellence in one area and good performance in the other area of concentration. No third area of concentration is required. Otherwise, similar criteria for promotion apply for the flexible track as with the tenure track. The time-line for submission of documents is the same as that for tenure track.

- d. The faculty member's application for promotion will be reviewed by the Promotion and Tenure Committee of the College of Medicine.
- e. The Dean will review and decide on all promotion requests for flexible track faculty, and forward his or her decision and the application packet to the Vice President for Health Affairs and the University President.

## **VII. Appeals**

- a. The faculty appeals process for promotions within the flexible track will be the same as that for the tenure track.

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