

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION COVID-19 RIDERS FOR RANK AND TENURE PROCESSES, 2021-2026

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the work of Faculty

We recognize that the pandemic has significantly impacted the scholarship of faculty beginning in Spring 2020, throughout the 2020-21 academic year, and potentially into the 2021-22 year and beyond. Faculty have responded with great effort, resilience, and creativity during this period. Finally, we note the economic stressors on the university, grant-funding organizations, and the families of faculty and staff, all of which place additional burdens on teaching, scholarship and service. We also note these additional factors:

- The additional burdens on faculty who have child-care, care-giving, or other family responsibilities,
- The long-term financial effects of delaying the tenure clock and the undesirability of that extension for many faculty, particularly given the suspension of both merit raises and retirement benefits.
- The additional work generated for faculty by the furloughing of multiple staff members.

Consequently, because “business-as-usual” has not been possible, the convergence of all these factors should be acknowledged in faculty reviews, tenure, and promotion processes. Like many universities, LMU has provided a one-year tenure clock extension option for all tenure-track faculty due to COVID-19. While this is one step toward accommodation, there are several specific challenges experienced by faculty in the educational sciences during the initial outbreak and peak of the pandemic, currently, and in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the purpose of this rider is to provide recommendations to rank and tenure reviewers at all levels (external reviewers, departments, chairs, deans, the Committee on Rank and Tenure, and provost) on how to evaluate the scholarship of faculty without bias or prejudice.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Faculty Scholarship

Some educational researchers at LMU conduct fieldwork, interviews, and observations as part of their scholarly trajectory (including participatory action research); some conduct experiments and surveys with human subjects on- and off-campus; some use quantitative data and surveys; still others draw deeply on archival sources. Most of this type of research is reliant on relationships with schools, district personnel, people in the field that are also struggling with the impact of the pandemic, which affects all levels of the research process, access, and data collection. Characteristics of the research population include essential workers such as teachers and counselors. Following, we note several specific challenges experienced by faculty in the educational sciences.

Increased demand for teaching activities

- Reduction of time for scholarship due to the demands of teaching online.
- Ongoing burden of increased time demands for teaching activities (online teaching PD)

Increased demand for administrative and service activities

- Reduction of time for scholarship due to additional administrative duties during the pandemic and the challenges associated with decreased administrative staff, hiring freeze, and other budgetary constraints.
- Increased childcare and family caretaking obligations.

Lack of access and restriction of research sites and study participants

- The resumption of fieldwork, experiments and interviews, often in multiple or far locations, will require time due to travel restrictions, travel risk, IRB/ACUC resubmissions, changes at field sites, planning for personal and/or local site virus protection (humans living at/near the field), planning for environmental protection (inter-species transmission), and other factors related to the virus.
- Research stays to gain access to data and collaboration have been heavily curtailed or impossible. Access to on-campus and off-campus labs, archives, and collections has been restricted or prohibited.
- Building alternative online data collection structures or gaining online access, if possible, is generally time intensive and not directly a research activity as well as costly. Access to study populations and research participants has been restricted or prohibited.
- Choice of research projects undertaken during this time has often been based on what can be done most safely in light of the restrictions, which won't necessarily align with expertise or what would be most high-impact/timely within the field.

Restrictions on dissemination and presentation of scholarly work

- Travel to present at conferences and seminars (where feedback can be received and collaborations can be started), and work with collaborators has been difficult if not impossible and remains so.
- Publishing pipelines have slowed: not only do editors have reduced budgets and more responsibilities; they also have a reduced pool of reviewers to draw from because of reviewers' own increased demands related to teaching, service, or caregiving responsibilities.

Research infrastructure

- Access to student researchers has been restricted (in time and number) or prohibited.
- Social-distancing requirements have hindered the training of new student researchers.
- Reduction of productivity has resulted not only in delays in the completion of projects but in obtaining data to be included in proposals for external funding, potentially having long-term effects on research programs.
- Limited access to library, logistical challenges, information on remote access of library materials

Recommendations for Reviewers During Rank & Tenure Evaluations

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic as listed in the attached rider have affected scholarly output, often in uneven ways. At each different level of review, we urge a consideration of quality over quantity, consistency and cohesive flow of prior work pre-pandemic, and engagement with the scholar's surrounding community during the pandemic as evidence of the likelihood of continued, future scholarly productivity. Given the aforementioned, the SOE recommends and affirms with this Rider the following relative to the evaluation of faculty scholarship for promotion and tenure:

- The narrative portions that describe impact due to COVID-19 on scholarship, if invoked by faculty, must be accepted as justified by reviewers at all levels without bias or need for further evidence.
- The impact of the pandemic on scholarly work described by the faculty members must be accepted as justified by reviewers and be given consideration relative to the normal expectations for publication, including productivity, consistency, and cohesive flow.
- Review letters (including from departmental scribes, chairs, deans, and the Committee) must follow and describe how the COVID-10 Rider was used in the evaluation of the candidate's scholarship.
- The interdependency of scholarship and teaching at LMU is acknowledged and, thus, impact to the former is assumed to have influence on the latter. In as much, there is the possibility of multiplicative impact not immediately identified or discussed in the narrative.