

University of Massachusetts Medical School Academic Personnel Policy

A Guide for Members of Personnel Action Committees

The department (DPAC) and school (PAC) Personnel Action Committees provide faculty peer review of candidates, an essential function in the UMMS procedure for appointment and promotion of faculty. This guide is designed to orient members of DPACs and PACs and provide an overview of the operation of these committees, as defined in the Academic Personnel Policy (APP), the Bylaws of each School, and the UMMS Governance Document.

Department Personnel Action Committee (DPAC)

Each Department in the School of Medicine (SOM) has a Department Personnel Action Committee (DPAC) to review and evaluate all candidates for appointment or promotion in the department and make recommendations to the chair (APP Section 3.10.a).

Formation. DPAC members are nominated annually by the chair and approved by a simple majority vote of the department faculty. A DPAC must consist of at least three faculty members with primary appointments in the department, preferably at the rank of Professor. Members serve for three-year terms and may serve multiple terms. The department chair cannot serve as a voting member of the DPAC or participate in its deliberations (the department chair may be present as an observer but not participate in or influence the committee's recommendations).

Operation. The department chair or their designee submits a candidate's Basic File to the DPAC. The DPAC reviews the Basic File and makes a written recommendation for appointment or promotion to an academic rank based on the criteria for that rank. The recommendation is added to the candidate's Basic File, which is submitted to the department chair (APP Section 3.10.d).

- Committee decisions are made by a simple majority of the voting members present at a meeting where there is a quorum (50% of the voting members).
- Committee members may participate in the vote in-person and/or via teleconference, video conference, or any other technology that allows full participation by the member. Proxy (absentee) voting is not permitted (APP Section 1.7.c).
- The DPAC recommendation must include the vote tally and the names of the DPAC members participating in the vote. The Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) provides a template letter for the committee's recommendation, which is usually written by the DPAC committee chair.
- DPAC members are bound by APP policies on confidentiality and conflict of interest (see below).

School Personnel Action Committee (PAC)

Each School has a Personnel Action Committee (PAC) to review and evaluate candidates for appointment or promotion in the School and make recommendations to the dean (APP Section 3.10.b).

Formation. Membership, advising and reporting responsibilities are defined in the Bylaws of each School.

Operation. The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (VPFA) submits a candidate's Basic File to the PAC after determining that it is complete. The PAC reviews the Basic File and makes a recommendation for appointment or promotion to an academic rank based on the criteria for that rank. The PAC's recommendation is submitted to the VPFA, who informs the candidate's department chair or the GSN Dean, as applicable (SOM: APP Section 3.12.f; GSN: APP Section 3.13.d).

- Operating procedures for each School PAC are defined in the Bylaws of the PAC.
- Committee decisions are made by a simple majority of the voting members present at a meeting where there is a quorum (50% of the voting members).
- The PAC recommendation must include the vote tally and the names of the PAC members participating in the vote.

- Committee members may participate in the vote in-person and/or via teleconference, video conference, or any other technology that allows full participation by the member. Proxy (absentee) voting is not permitted (APP Section 1.7.c).
- PAC members are bound by APP policies on confidentiality and conflict of interest (see below).
- A PAC member who has voted in the department review of the candidate may participate in the PAC review but is not allowed to vote.

If the PAC recommends appointment or promotion, the recommendation is sent to the Executive Council for review and then to the dean for approval. If the dean intends to make a decision different from the recommendation of the PAC, the dean must meet with the PAC chair for consultation. The final decision on appointment or promotion of candidates is made by the dean subject to approval by the Provost and Chancellor.

If the School of Medicine PAC does not recommend a candidate for appointment or promotion, the APP describes subsequent steps. If the department chair accepts the PAC's recommendation, the procedure is concluded. Alternatively, the chair may provide clarification or additional information for the candidate's Basic File, which is submitted to the PAC for re-review. If, after this second review, the PAC does not recommend the candidate for appointment or promotion, the procedure is concluded. Otherwise, the PAC's recommendation to appoint or promote the candidate is sent to the Executive Council for review and to the dean for approval.

If the Graduate School of Nursing PAC does not recommend a candidate for appointment or promotion, the procedure is concluded.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises if the ability of a DPAC or PAC member to render a fair and impartial recommendation may reasonably be impacted in light of their personal, professional, familial and/or financial relationships with the candidate. For example, a real or perceived conflict of interest might occur if the committee member and candidate have:

- a familial relationship, as defined in the APP (Section 1.7.a)
- a financial relationship, such co-funding on grants or joint ownership or investment in a business
- a professional relationship, such as a mentoring relationship or a collaboration

The DPAC or PAC committee chair is responsible for determining whether a committee member has a real or perceived bias or conflict of interest (APP Section 1.7.a) and for excusing the member from participation in the review of a candidate. A committee member may also decide to withdraw from participation in the review or bring the matter to the committee chair for resolution.

DPAC or PAC committee members who write letters of evaluation for a candidate may participate in the review of the candidate but are not allowed to vote on the DPAC or PAC recommendation.

Confidentiality

The review process and candidate materials are confidential (APP Section 1.7.b). DPAC and PAC members must not communicate, particularly to the candidate, recommendations by chairs and review committees, vote tallies, and letters of evaluation—including the identity of letter writers—or disclose information about committee deliberations, discussions, or evaluations to anyone who has not been officially designated to participate in the review process.

Questions

Questions about the processes, procedures, and/or criteria for appointment or promotion should be directed to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (Luanne Thorndyke, MD, Luanne.Thorndyke@umassmed.edu) or to the OFA Academic Personnel Specialist (Gennie Ludovico, Gennie.Ludovico@umassmed.edu). Resources and additional information are available on the OFA website: <https://www.umassmed.edu/ofa/>.