

# DOCUMENTING PANDEMIC IMPACTS: BEST PRACTICES

## WHY DOCUMENT THE IMPACT?

The COVID-19 pandemic immediately impacted faculty members' [workloads](#). Most faculty members have had to do significantly more work, [moving courses online](#), [mentoring](#) students in need, reworking university programs and addressing [COVID-19 risks](#), and helping [communities](#) manage current realities. At the same time, many faculty members are experiencing damage to their productivity and research record, due to lack of access to labs and facilities, research sites, and research subjects, as well as canceled conferences and inability to travel to conduct research and meet with collaborators.

These effects are exacerbated by differences among faculty. Those with children at home that need care or homeschooling or other family members that need care, face [limited work time](#) ([research](#) shows that women are submitting fewer journal articles during the pandemic). Women and faculty of color were already burdened by [higher levels of mentoring](#) students, which takes on new weight during the pandemic. [Faculty of color](#) are more likely to be suffering losses, and providing care for extended family members. Those facing intersectional inequalities, such as women of color, face the highest burdens. Vulnerable faculty members may also be less comfortable drawing attention to COVID-19 impacts.

The impacts of the pandemic will resonate throughout faculty careers for many years. Documenting these lingering impacts helps the university to recognize the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – mitigating against unequal outcomes. Documenting the effects of COVID-19 allows the universities to assess faculty members fairly, accounting for their different working conditions under and even after the pandemic. Through careful documentation and thoughtful recognition of pandemic impacts in fair evaluation processes, the variable impacts of COVID will be less likely to worsen existing inequalities.

## HOW CAN FACULTY MEMBERS DOCUMENT PANDEMIC IMPACTS?

Many faculty members may feel it is unnecessary to document pandemic impacts, since so many people have been affected. Yet, COVID-19 has *differential* impacts; internal and external evaluators may not understand or know the specific context in which faculty members' work has been disrupted, depending on where they are located or their own pandemic experiences. In addition, over time, people may no longer recognize how disruptive COVID-19 has been to faculty careers.



Below are ideas about how to document pandemic impacts through annual faculty reviews, and separate “pandemic impact statements” for personnel reviews (faculty might also list canceled fellowships, conferences or speaking engagements on CVs). These ideas are not meant to pressure all faculty into documenting every possible impact. Documenting should identify impacts that help others understand a person’s career trajectory given COVID-19, both in terms of new responsibilities as well as unexpected challenges. Documenting should make relevant but potentially invisible impacts visible.

Drawing on a [PNAS](#) article, we recommend tracking the following, and documenting those relevant through annual faculty reviews or pandemic impact statements:

- Identify scope of work during the pandemic. If granted “essential worker” status, what work did it apply to, and what new work was added.
- Document changes to courses, including moving courses online and new technologies. Faculty may identify how many additional hours each week focused on teaching to concretize these effects (e.g., 15-hour/week workload for X course shifted to 30-hour/week workload for 7 weeks).
- Point out specific challenges, such as lack of resources (high-speed broadband, software) for faculty and students, and trainings attended or led.
- Identify additional teaching responsibilities, including course overloads due to personnel changes, retirements, issues with teaching assistants, assisting others with technology, other workload changes.
- Address how advising changed, particularly as students navigated changing requirements. Identify any increases in advising load. Mention any additional support for students experiencing physical and or mental health, economic, and social consequences of the pandemic.
- Document mentoring impacts, including student progress, and additional mentoring time required with students/peers facing pandemic impacts.

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- List attending/leading meetings, additional efforts made – any work that would not have occurred during a regular semester. List efforts to move meetings/events online e.g. commencement.
- List additional work needed to develop plans for closing and re-opening of laboratories, including: coordination among research teams, development of cleaning and distancing protocols in the laboratory space, etc.
- Identify contributions to any department, university, professional society, interdisciplinary, or community-engaged pandemic initiative.
- Identify how research or creative work was disrupted. For example, faculty might note loss of:
  - Research time due to increased or changed teaching and service responsibilities
  - Sabbatical time, other paid or unpaid leave (Fulbright, Guggenheim, etc.)
  - If willing, research time due to health issues or caregiving responsibilities
  - Access to necessary research facilities/labs/ computing resources (including impacts on longitudinal research), studios, or venues for creative works/performances
  - Access to research subjects, animals, cell cultures (including for longitudinal research)
  - Additional time and resources spent to restart research, which varies by field
  - Travel and field research opportunities
  - Funding to support personnel due to travel and visa restrictions or due to research restrictions
  - Access to internal or external research funds
- Faculty should further note other kinds of impacts:
  - Additional teaching/preparations
  - Cancellations of seminars, presentations, visits with collaborators or research teams
  - Challenges due to increased time for review of submissions for funding or publication
  - Redirected funding for COVID-19 related topics
  - Pivoting/changing research agenda due to pandemic restrictions
  - Diversion of funds for PPE
  - Donation of supplies or personnel time to COVID-19 initiatives
  - Challenges due to travel/visa restrictions

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## HOW SHOULD EVALUATORS CONSIDER PERSONNEL CASES?

The Provost has made many changes recognizing pandemic impacts in his [tenure/promotion memo](#). Evaluators, including Personnel Committee members, Chairs/Heads, administrators, and external evaluators, should recognize the contributions faculty have made in various spheres, while considering each person's specific

*working conditions*, rather than comparing across faculty with different working conditions. Increased caregiving responsibilities or lack of access to research facilities as a result of the pandemic should not negatively affect assessments of faculty. This should be communicated to external reviewers. Following the contract, **faculty members with tenure-delays must not be held to higher standards.**

While not all faculty may wish to document health or caregiving impacts, reviewers should note that caregiving responsibilities or efforts toward homeschooling children (including single parenthood) reflects the disparate impact COVID-19 had on work-time for faculty members. Similarly, documentation of illness, risk of illness (pre-existing conditions, partnership with an essential worker), or loss of loved ones, provides greater context for assessments. De-stigmatizing care and illness is important to creating fair assessments.

Personnel Committees may write a standardized acknowledgement of pandemic impacts with particular attention to their field and expected disruptions to work for all faculty members. This statement could be inserted at the beginning of each PC memo responding to faculty submission as context for the annual review.

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## WHAT RESOURCES EXIST FOR ADDRESSING COVID IMPACTS?

- PNAS published an [op-ed](#) on evaluating faculty, as well as an [online supplement](#), which we drew on heavily for this brief.
- [ADVANCE](#) provides trainings for Personnel Committee members and Chairs/Heads on equitable evaluation in the COVID and post-COVID era.
- The [Office of Faculty Development](#) and Associate Provost for Equity and Inclusion provide a [wide array of resources](#) that support faculty during COVID-19, including a [Resilience](#) series.
- The [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) provides programming, aimed at the needs of members of underrepresented groups on campus.
- The faculty union, Massachusetts Society of Professors, has won a number of excellent [provisions and supports](#), including care funds, technology funds, tenure delays, work credits for UMass faculty.

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