

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	ACAF Academic Affairs
POLICY NUMBER	ACAF 1.16
POLICY TITLE	Professional-track Faculty
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC Columbia
DATE OF REVISION	March 2, 2026
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	Office of the Provost

PURPOSE

This policy provides expectations and procedures for recruitment, appointment, evaluation and promotion of professional-track faculty.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Faculty: University personnel who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and/or administration. Faculty can be further classified as having tenure-track, professional-track, or honorific appointments.

Professional track: designation for faculty members who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and/or administration but who are not eligible for tenure.

POLICY

The University of South Carolina recognizes the importance and contribution of professional-track faculty to the educational, research, and service missions and success of the university.

Professional-track faculty members are defined in policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff](#). Professional-track faculty members are engaged in research, instruction, inside and outside the classroom, service, and administration. Professional-track faculty members are not eligible for tenure nor does any of the time that is spent in a professional-track position count toward the probationary period for tenure.

This policy applies to all professional-track faculty positions listed in policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff](#), including those below:

- instructor, lecturer, senior instructor, senior lecturer, principal instructor and principal lecturer
- instructor librarian
- clinical assistant professor, clinical associate professor, and clinical professor
- clinical instructor, clinical senior instructor, clinical lecturer, clinical senior lecturer, principal clinical instructor and principal clinical lecturer
- research assistant professor, research associate professor, and research professor
- teaching professor, teaching associate professor and teaching assistant professor
- part-time assistant professor, part-time associate professor, and part-time professor

- professor of practice, legal writing instructor, senior legal writing instructor, and principal legal writing instructor

A. College, School and Academic Unit Policies

The roles of professional-track faculty vary by college, school and academic unit; for that reason, each college, school, and academic unit develops policies to address its particular academic environment.

1. Each college, school, and academic unit must have a written set of criteria and procedures regarding professional-track faculty members to remain in compliance with this policy, the USC Columbia [Faculty Manual](#), all pertinent state and federal laws, and all requirements of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).
2. College, school, and academic unit criteria and procedures regarding professional-track faculty must specify minimum contract length, which must equal or exceed one year for professional-track faculty in their initial hire and the first renewal, then must equal or exceed three years after three consecutive years of appointment. For professional-track faculty with temporary, time-limited, or research-grant appointments, the minimum contract requirement is not required.
3. Policies created by colleges, schools, and academic units regarding professional-track faculty must be approved by the dean, and then submitted to the provost, who shall forward the proposed criteria and procedures to the University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty for final approval. The dean of the college or school may authorize separate criteria and procedures for the different academic units within the college or school or may have one set of criteria and procedures for all academic units within the college or school. The dean is responsible for ensuring that all approved criteria and procedures regarding professional-track faculty are implemented within the college/school.

B. Appointment and Hiring

1. All appointments to professional-track faculty positions must follow the guidelines in policy [ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty](#).
2. Appointments to professional-track faculty positions at the university may only be awarded by college and school deans as the designated hiring authority. All faculty positions must have an official academic appointment in a college or school regardless of the position's organizational home. If a unit reports to a vice president, the vice president should be consulted prior to appointment.
3. Required Approvals

- a. Appointments at the rank of principal instructor, professor of practice, teaching professor, clinical professor, or research professor must be approved, through academic channels, by the president.
- b. Appointment to all other professional-track faculty positions must be approved by the college or school dean, unless otherwise specified by the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost.

4. Credential Requirements for Instructional Staff

All university faculty and other academic personnel involved in instruction must meet SACSCOC credential requirements for teaching at the appropriate level as outlined in policy [ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#). College and school deans are responsible for ensuring that all professional-track faculty in instructional positions have the required credentials.

C. Review and Promotion

1. **Unit Criteria:** Review and promotion criteria are developed by individual academic units and must be based upon primary position duties (i.e., specified balance of teaching, research and/or outreach activities, and service to the university). The unit's professional-track faculty along with the tenure-track faculty should be involved in the development of the unit criteria.
2. **Annual Review:** Annual review of all professional-track faculty members is required. Annual review of professional-track faculty should be scheduled according to an annual review calendar. The annual review is conducted as specified in the unit criteria, either by a select committee, by the direct supervisor or by the department chair, institute/center director, or dean. The annual review is submitted to the department chair, institute/center director, or dean depending upon whether the unit is a college that has departments, institutes, and/or centers.
3. **Promotion:** Promotion of a professional-track faculty member can be recommended if the faculty member has (a) completed the time in rank specified in the promotion criteria, if applicable, and (b) has met the unit criteria for promotion.

Calls for promotion materials and review of these materials should be according to the calendar set by the unit.

Promotion is recommended by the dean and approved by the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost. If the unit reports to a vice president, the vice president should also provide a recommendation.

1. **Non-Reappointment and Termination for Professional-Track Faculty in FTE Positions:**

- a. Appointments of professional-track faculty shall be in writing and shall specify the beginning and ending date of appointment. Appointments shall terminate on the date specified.
 - b. Notice of non-reappointment is required in writing from the Dean of the college to whom the faculty member reports. In the initial one-year terms of any professional-track faculty appointment, notice of non-reappointment is recommended but not required
 - c. For those professional-track faculty with three to five-year contracts, the faculty member must be given notice of non-reappointment at least 180 days before the end of the contract.
 - d. Termination of employment before the end of the contract period can only be for cause, as defined in the Faculty Manual.
2. Change of Status: The change of status to and from the tenure-track faculty is governed by the USC Columbia *Faculty Manual* and policy [ACAF 1.18 Change of Status Between Tenure Track and Professional Track](#).

D. Voting Rights

Voting rights of full-time professional-track faculty members at the university-level of governance are specified in the USC Columbia *Faculty Manual*. Voting rights for professional-track faculty at the college/school level and in academic sub-units (e.g., departments) follow the university voting rights.

PROCEDURES

- A. Procedures for the development, revision, and oversight of college/school protocols are the responsibility of the dean. All initial and revised protocols on professional-track faculty must be sent from the dean to the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost and the University Committee on Professional-track Faculty for approval.
- B. Searches for new and replacement professional-track faculty members should be advertised nationally for no fewer than 45 calendar days..
- C. When an emergency situation exists and a position must be filled immediately, a temporary faculty member may be hired in the position for no more than one academic year. If the position needs to be filled for additional time after the initial emergency time period, then a documented search process must be conducted, including advertising the position nationally for a minimum of 45 calendar days, as required by policy [ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty](#).
- D. Appointments must use university-approved titles and credential requirements as defined in policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff](#).

- E. The length of the appointment must be specified in an offer letter per policy section A.2 above and may not exceed five years. The appointment may be renewable.

Offer letters must also state the appointment is contingent upon the availability of funding. Even in multi-year contracts, the offer letter must state that renewal for each subsequent year is contingent upon satisfactory performance and available funds.

- F. The Division of Human Resources must be notified regarding processing of appointments, promotions, non-reappointment, termination, and grievances for professional-track faculty.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[USC Columbia Faculty Manual](#)

[ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#)

[ACAF 1.18 Change of Status Between Tenure Track and Professional Track](#)

[ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#)

[CR 2.00 Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination](#)

[HR 1.90 Job Reference and Background Checks](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
August 13, 2012	New policy approval
September 2, 2016	Policy revised to reference related policy, ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record, and to remove outdated procedures regarding SACSCOC Faculty Roster responsibilities.
June 3, 2021	Reformat to new template; change to professional-track nomenclature; clarify titles and minimum terms of appointment.
August 8, 2022	Updated procedures to clarify temporary faculty hires
April 14, 2025	Policy reviewed and updated to current standards and practices.
March 2, 2026	Policy updated to align with advertisement changes in ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-track, and Professional-track Faculty