

**Guidance on Remote and Virtual
APT/AEP/Permanent Status Deliberations and Voting
April 15, 2020**

In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on University operations, including compliance with stay-at-home and restricted research directives from the State Government and Campus Administration, many APT, AEP, Permanent Status and other confidential processes that fall to faculty affairs require adjustment to virtual formats and online platforms. While some units have in place governing rules and processes that permit online/remote participation in deliberations in whole or part, others do not.

In recognition that virtual participation and voting may be unregulated or prohibited in certain unit- or college-level APT, AEP, and Permanent Status policies, the Provost authorized units to modify rules temporarily in order to ensure that review processes can continue under current circumstances.

Provost Mary Ann Rankin (March 11, 2020 2:38pm)

Similarly, rules requiring in-person participation in dissertation defense and promotion and tenure committee meetings may need to be relaxed during this period to allow for on-line participation of committee members or candidates. Again, it is important that these emergency measures be implemented equitably with appropriate documentation and approvals. We encourage and authorize the use of virtual meeting tools to facilitate these review processes.

The below provides implementation guidance regarding APT/AEP/Permanent Status online review processes due to the COVID-19 situation.

Confidential Deliberations and Voting during Telework

In recognition of more recent April 6 [instructions from UHR](#) that telework shall continue through May 22, 2020, to be followed by the standard dispersal of 9-month appointment and promotion committee members during the summer months, the Office of Faculty Affairs provides the following guidance on confidential APT, AEP, and Permanent Status deliberations that may take place at anytime through the end of the AY 2020-21 review cycle. Further adjustments may be necessary based on further guidance from campus, USM, and/or the Governor.

The four principal guidances are:

1. Standing APT, AEP, and Permanent Status policy, guidelines, and procedures remain in effect regardless of the modality of the deliberations. University APT [Policy](#) and [Guidelines](#); AEP [Guidelines](#); and APPS [Policy](#) and APPSC [Guidelines](#), remain in effect, as do the first- and second-level (department, school, college, library) policies and guidelines. Expectations for confidentiality, security, equity, due process, and other requirements governing the APT, AEP, and Permanent Status processes continue to apply. It is solely the means by which deliberations and operations (e.g., discussions, voting, workflow) occur that require adaptation under this guidance.
2. Candidate dossiers shall be assembled, shared, and transmitted exclusively via secure University-supported platforms (e.g., Canvas; UMD Box; UMD Google Drive; Office of Faculty Affairs Appointments Promotions, and Awards portal). Access rights should be managed to ensure that solely eligible faculty and administrators as well as appropriate support staff be able to view, edit, download, and/or share electronic dossiers. To further ensure the security of the materials, dossiers should be password-protected when transmitted.
3. All APT, AEP, and Permanent Status meetings are expected to take place via a secure University-supported video or tele-conferencing platform (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, Hangouts Meet).
4. In the absence of an insurmountable technological breakdown, the same meeting rules, settings, and platform should be used for all APT, AEP, and Permanent Status cases under consideration in the same unit.

Technologies and Practices

The Office of Faculty Affairs strongly recommends the Zoom platform for online deliberations due to its stability, security, and meeting management features. However, units may opt to use a University-supported platform other than Zoom (e.g, UMD Webex, UMD Google). Regardless of the adopted platform for APT/AEP/Permanent Status deliberations, the committee chair/convener and appropriate support staff are responsible for ensuring that the requirements/guidances described below are technically possible. Further, OFA urges the APT, AEP, and Permanent Status committee chair/convener and appropriate support staff to test the selected platform ahead of any scheduled deliberative meeting; ensure that those managing the deliberations are familiar with the platform(s) ahead of time; ensure that all eligible participants are able to use the platforms (Accessibility); and ensure that the platform meets the requirements articulated below. Units are also strongly encouraged to select and familiarize participants with a backup platform in case there are technical challenges with the platform of first choice and it becomes unusable for any reason.

Preserving Confidentiality and Securing Privacy

Expectations for confidentiality remain unchanged. All virtual meetings and proceedings still require strict adherence to best practices of confidentiality and records privacy before, during, and after virtual meetings including deliberations and binding votes. Information regarding Zoom security features is available [here](#). Information regarding WebEx security features is available [here](#).

Before the meeting:

The unit- or college-level APT/AEP/Permanent Status policy continues to govern meeting convening requirements such as the meeting announcement, the required period of advance notice, dossier availability, meeting attendance, and if and how absentee balloting is permissible.

Either the person serving as the chair/convenor of the meeting or a designee should schedule a video or teleconference using a University-supported platform and account.

Any meeting during which confidential matters are to be discussed must be assigned a unique ID and password. By default, eligible participants shall be expected to login to the meeting by authenticating with University credentials and a password. However, when UMD authentication is unavailable or not working properly, eligible participants shall still be extended the rights of voice and vote, subject to relevant policy restrictions.

Consistent with the first- or second-level policy, the person designated to convene/chair the meeting or a designee is responsible for announcing the meeting length, agenda, eligible participants, login information, and any other meeting logistics. The policy-designated convenor/chair or designee should also detail the parameters of online participant behavior and the meeting, including the permissible use of audio and video settings, chats, screen-sharing, and file uploads. Guidance on managing Zoom meeting participant features is available [here](#). Guidance on managing WebEx meetings is available [here](#).

Given the number of administrative steps required to schedule an online meeting, invite participants, monitor waiting rooms, verify participants, etc., it is recommended that a designee of the APT/AEP/Permanent Status committee convenor/chair should have responsibility for managing participant settings and functionalities as well as the enabled waiting rooms.

Accessibility

It is essential that all eligible participants be able to fully engage in the APT/AEP/Permanent Status deliberations and if necessary, provided with reasonable accommodations to ensure participation. For questions/concerns related to accessibility of the online meeting platforms, contact the DIT Accessibility office at itaccessibility@umd.edu.

During the meeting:

To ensure that only authorized participants are present and to ensure a quorum, the committee chair/convener (or designee) should start each meeting with a roll call of attendees.

APT/AEP/Permanent Status deliberations are confidential personnel matters. OFA strongly discourages online recording of APT, AEP, and Permanent Status deliberations. By default, the committee chair/convener (or designee) should disable all recording features. If for some reason it becomes necessary to record in audio or video (or both) the deliberations, it is required that State Law and privacy considerations are followed, in particular, explicit consent from each meeting participant must be obtained and should be reflected in the minutes. In addition to seeking consent for recordings, participants must be informed regarding the access to and use of the recording, by whom, and how long it will be available. See here for University [guidance](#) on this matter.

The Office of Faculty Affairs instructs the meeting committee chair/convener or designee to [disable the Private Chat in Zoom](#) feature to ensure that all deliberations are conducted in the open. Guidance on managing the chat feature within WebEx is available [here](#).

Consistent with the unit-level policy and established rules of order, the convener/chair or designee shall moderate the deliberations and voting. Consistent with the appropriate policy first- or second-level, minutes of discussion and votes shall be recorded.

As online deliberations proceed, the convener/chair and participants may make ample and appropriate use of the meeting engagement features such as hands-up, yes/no, reactions, and polling. It is important to recognize, however, that if some participants are participating by video connections and others by phone, the reactions, polling, and group chat features may not be visible to all and the meeting convener/chair should ensure that all participants are able to engage in the meeting activities.

When voting on APT/AEP/Permanent Status cases, the committee chair/convener (or designee) may use the reactions and related features for non-binding straw polls, but when established plans call for secret balloting, the voting process must be kept confidential from all voting-eligible participants. Units should select the University-supported voting platform (e.g., Zoom, Qualtrics, TurningPoint) and determine Voting procedures ahead of the meeting and those procedures, along with instructions, should be communicated to the meeting participants ahead of time so that participants can familiarize themselves with the voting process. Units may wish to consider using a non-voting attendee (i.e., unit/college administrative support) to manage secret balloting, make public the vote tally, and to record the binding vote.

DivIT provides a basic overview of Zoom polling [here](#). Zoom provides additional support, including how to make them anonymous, [here](#). Information regarding TurningPoint is available [here](#). Information regarding Qualtrics is available [here](#).

After the meeting:

If participant rosters, group chats, and polling features were enabled before the meeting, the meeting committee chair/convener (or designee) will have to determine if a log is to be saved. Any files that are saved to a cloud service or downloaded shall be treated with the same level of confidentiality, security, and document retention as expected for candidate dossiers and meeting minutes.

Meeting IDs and passwords should not be reused.

For more information, contact:

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