3.4 Position Responsibility Statement

It is the policy of Iowa State University that evaluations of tenure-eligible/tenured faculty are based on the position responsibilities of faculty members and other activities that relate to faculty appointments. The results of all reviews must be shared with the individual faculty members.

3.4.1 General Description

A position responsibility statement (PRS) is a tool that describes the range of responsibilities undertaken by a faculty member. The PRS is written and approved by both the faculty member and the department chair. Because responsibilities and duties change throughout faculty careers, the PRS shall be reviewed and updated as necessary at intervals appropriate to the stages of faculty career development. Thus the PRS allows for a flexible and individualized system of faculty review. The PRS shall not prevent or constrain justifiable changes to or developments within any area of a faculty member’s position responsibilities. The PRS description itself should be general and include only the significant responsibilities of the faculty member that are important in evaluating faculty accomplishments especially in the promotion and tenure process for tenure-eligible/tenured faculty or for advancement for non-tenure-eligible faculty.

The PRS shall not violate the faculty member's academic freedom. If the parties agree to more specific language beyond a general description of areas of position responsibilities, that specific language shall not be understood to be a checklist or constraint on the faculty member’s freedom to choose areas and methods of inquiry appropriate to the discipline.

Because it outlines the expectations for faculty members in carrying out their duties in accordance with Iowa State University’s public land-grant university mission, the PRS shall be understood to be a public document.

3.4.1.1 Appointments Requiring a PRS

All faculty members with appointments governed by the Faculty Handbook as defined in Section 3.3 shall have a PRS. University administrators generally have faculty rank. If a university administrator has significant non-administrative responsibilities (especially research/creative activity, teaching, or outreach) carried out within an academic department of the university, he/she shall have a PRS appropriate to his/her duties in that department. Department chairs will have a PRS, written by the department chair and the dean, describing the administrative and other departmental responsibilities of the position.

3.4.1.2 Intended Use of the PRS

As noted in Chapter 5 (Evaluation and Review), the PRS is a tool referenced during all forms of faculty review. The PRS is particularly significant within the promotion and tenure
process of tenure-eligible/tenured faculty or for advancement of non-tenure-eligible faculty. The PRS should allow both faculty members and their administrative and peer evaluators to understand the basis of the academic appointment and to place that into context with the promotion and tenure criteria. The descriptions should be brief but may include detail important to the department and/or faculty member.

3.4.2 The Form of the PRS

3.4.2.1 Required Elements

Every PRS should be a brief document and must include the following information:
- Name of faculty member and faculty salary base
- Title
- Primary department (tenure home)
- Secondary department (if applicable)
- Description of areas of position responsibility
- Signatures of the faculty member and department chair(s)
- Signature date
- Formal review date

Colleges may require additional statements or information to clarify the nature of faculty position responsibilities.

3.4.2.2 Individualization of Areas of Position Responsibility

Faculty responsibilities in a land-grant university are diverse. Examples of areas of position responsibility common to many faculty include, but are not limited to: teaching, research/creative activity, extension, outreach, professional practice, clinical practice, professional service, and institutional service. The description of areas of position responsibility in the PRS should include whichever areas of position responsibility are applicable to the faculty member.

Because the PRS is used in evaluation, the goal of the PRS is to provide an individualized description of the expected responsibilities of each faculty member. To this end, the PRS will include a brief narrative describing the position responsibilities along with indication of the expected distribution of those responsibilities (e.g., expected proportion of effort or relative importance). Different faculty members have different ranges of duties and responsibilities. The PRS’s description of the distribution of areas of position responsibility should reflect how the faculty member’s distribution compares to those of other faculty in the same department or college. (For example, a faculty member who teaches six classes has a greater expected proportion of effort for teaching than a faculty member who teaches one class. With the greater assignment of teaching responsibilities, the evaluator gives greater weight to teaching for the faculty member with the greater number of classes, in accordance with evaluation procedures.) The responsibilities and their distribution should
be compatible with satisfying or exceeding the expectations for promotion and tenure or advancement.

3.4.3 Procedures for Establishment and Maintenance of the PRS

3.4.3.1 Procedures at Initial Appointment

Within six weeks of the first day of work, the chair and the new tenure-eligible/tenured faculty member should agree on a PRS that is based on the job advertisement. Tenure-eligible/tenured faculty are expected to have substantive discussions with their chair in establishing their PRS. NTE faculty will generally have an initial PRS with a narrower scope of duties. Upon initial appointment, most lecturers, clinicians, and NTE research faculty will sign a PRS indicating the specific duties for which they are hired. In all cases, the PRS will be signed and dated by both parties. The signed and dated copy will be on file in the faculty member’s personnel file and in the dean’s office.

3.4.3.1.1 Joint Appointments

In the case of faculty members who have appointments in two departments (or a department and a program), a PRS will be written by the faculty member and the two chairs and signed and dated by all three parties. Each department and college involved will receive copies of those statements as indicated above. For tenure-eligible/tenured faculty, the PRS will specify the primary department in which the faculty member’s tenure resides or in which a tenure decision will be made. Because evaluations of faculty initiate in their primary department, changes and updates to the PRS will initiate in that primary department. Faculty members with joint appointments are expected to communicate with the chair in their secondary department or program to maintain a PRS signed by all three parties.

3.4.3.2 Review and Update of the PRS

The PRS will be subject to regular review by the faculty member and his/her chair, and allow for flexibility in responsibilities over time and for the changing nature of faculty appointments and faculty circumstances. Faculty members and their chairs may discuss the PRS and modify it (if appropriate) at any time. FH 5.1.1.2 states that review of the PRS is to occur during the annual review meeting between the faculty member and the chair. The PRS should not be rewritten unless there is the expectation of a substantive change in the faculty member’s position responsibilities. The PRS cannot be changed unilaterally by either the chair or the faculty member. T

3.4.3.2.1 Formal Review of the PRS

Every PRS shall specify a date for formal review. The review date should correspond with major action reviews for tenure-eligible/tenured faculty (preliminary review, promotion and tenure review, post-tenure review) and with renewal for NTE faculty. During or immediately after the formal review, even if no changes are made, the PRS shall be updated
with a new formal review date and signed and dated by both parties. The faculty member’s department(s) and college(s) shall receive a copy of the updated PRS with signatures. Department governance documents may specify more frequent intervals for formal review of PRSs, but departments are prohibited from conducting formal reviews less frequently than the intervals here specified.

3.4.4 Procedure for Mediating PRS Disputes

When both parties (the faculty member and the department chair) agree to the PRS, it will be signed by both parties and dated. However if one of the parties disagrees with a proposed change to the faculty member’s PRS, either party may refer the matter to the PRS Mediation Panel, which will be in place in each department. This panel will consist of three faculty members at equal rank or higher than the faculty member whose PRS is being disputed. Each party shall select one member of the panel. Unless the department decides otherwise, the default policy for selecting the third member will be by faculty election in the department at the beginning of each year\(^1\). The faculty members selected by the two parties will be selected at the time of the disagreement between those two parties.

The party referring the matter to the PRS Mediation Panel will submit to the panel the faculty member’s existing PRS, the text of the proposed PRS, an explanation of why the change is being sought/or is not acceptable, and the faculty member’s curriculum vita. The other party should provide a written explanation of why the proposed change is not acceptable/is being sought. The PRS Mediation Panel will review the materials that have been submitted, meet with both parties, deliberate on the issue, and deliver a written opinion in a timely fashion (within two months) on how the disagreement should be resolved. The faculty member and the department chair should then reconsider the matter to see if an agreement can now be reached based on the panel’s recommendation. If an agreement between the faculty member and the department chair does not then emerge within ten working days, the matter will be forwarded by the party disagreeing with the proposed change to the faculty member’s college where a mechanism, which will be fair and equitable to both parties (e.g., elected group) will be in place for further consideration and resolution. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the matter will be taken to the dean of the college by the party disagreeing with the proposed change.

During the time of this mediation process, the existing signed and dated PRS will remain in effect.

\(^1\) Departments who desire another method of obtaining the third member may choose one of the following: a) a tenured faculty member who is chair of an elected departmental council; b) a tenured faculty member who has been elected by the department to the promotion and tenure review committee and who chairs that committee; c) a tenured faculty member who has been elected by the department to the post-tenure review committee and who chairs that committee.

Approved as amended by the Faculty Senate 2/13/07.