



“Opportunity” Hires: Procedures

GMU Definitions

George Mason University does not use the term “opportunity hire” in its *Faculty Handbook*. Rather, this type of hiring procedure is defined as a “non-competitive appointment.” As stated within the *GMU Faculty Handbook* (2018, §2.3.2.2),

Noncompetitive or direct appointments are appointments in which the search process is waived when appointing term, tenured, and tenure-track faculty. Competitive searches for tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty must be used except in very special circumstances. These circumstances are normally limited to situations in which

- (a) *the candidate has already established a national/international reputation*, the program has a unique opportunity to appoint the targeted candidate, and the area of specialization complements those of faculty already in the program;
- (b) *the candidate is a spouse or partner of a candidate being appointed through formal search procedures* and the university is attempting to accommodate her or him; or
- (c) *an administrator is appointed and considered for acceptance in a specific local academic unit*. While an administrator is normally appointed using a competitive process at the administrative level, this policy applies because s/he is not part of a competitive process at the [local academic unit] level. Instructional term faculty may also be appointed without a search when classes must be staffed immediately due to unexpected circumstances. Waiver of a search in this situation is only valid for one year. (Emphases added)

The *Faculty Handbook* adds that any individual who is a candidate for a noncompetitive position must be appointed “using the same procedures as those used to review candidates for competitive appointments.” Additionally, if a term faculty member seeks a noncompetitive appointment to a tenure-track position, at least “two-thirds of the LAU faculty who are eligible to vote [must] accept the candidate.”

Term Faculty

The Schar School already has developed procedures for hiring term instructional and research faculty members. Please see “Hiring Term Faculty” for a full description of the process. Briefly stated,

- The Dean determines a need, then presents to appropriate faculty (e.g., program directors or directors of the Offices of Research and Extramural Projects);
- Members of appropriate PF will
 - Review candidate’s materials,
 - Meet with candidate and/or attend a job seminar or formal presentation by the candidate, and
 - Vote on the acceptability of the candidate; and, if a majority of these faculty agree
- Dean’s Office will develop a 1-year contract for the candidate.

Tenured Faculty

Given the Mason definition of “noncompetitive or direct faculty” appointments, the assumption is that such a person would be hired as a tenured full professor, with a possibility that a senior-level tenured associate professor might be eligible.

The procedures for hiring such an instructional faculty member are as follows.* The process may be stopped at any step at which there is a negative decision.

1. A proposal for the hire should be presented to the Senior Associate Dean for Administration, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA), the Associate Dean for Program Faculties (ADPF), and the Director of External Projects. The proposal should include the name of the individual and the area(s) of expertise of the individual as well as the services the individual will provide to the school (e.g., courses to be taught, research to be accomplished).
 - a. The Senior Associate Dean will determine whether funding is available and assure that all Schar School procedures are followed;
 - b. ADAA and ADPF will determine whether the course(s) are viable; and
 - c. The Director of External Projects will determine the likelihood of sponsored program activity.
2. The individual’s CV and other materials (course evaluations, example publications, and 5 confidential letters of reference – any information require for tenure decisions other than the letters by outside reviewers) will be reviewed by the RPT committee. As appropriate or needed, the committee may meet with the candidate. The committee’s report will include recommendations of whether the candidate (1) presents an opportunity worthy of a noncompetitive hire (based on the materials presented and a comparison of the individual’s work to the work of other scholars in the field) and (2) merits awarding of tenure, based on the normal Schar School two-level process.
3. The ADPF will present the RPT committee’s report to the PF to which the candidate would be assigned. The ADPF may request a presentation from the candidate; the Committee of the Whole would be invited to this presentation. The normal procedures for hiring a faculty member would be used, including a report with recommendation prepared for the Dean. The report will provide specific reason(s) why this individual should be hired through a noncompetitive process.
4. The Dean will ask the Senior Associate Dean and the Director of Human Resources and Planning to develop an appropriate request to hire the candidate. This will include
 - a. Request of waiver from search,
 - b. Report on the tenure decision, and
 - c. Dean’s letter in support of the tenure decision and hire.
5. The Dean will ask the Senior Associate Dean to negotiate with the candidate. With approval of the Dean, and in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources and Planning, the Senior Associate Dean will prepare a contract.

* Note that these procedures are adapted slightly from the Schar School RPT procedures and the procedures that the Schar School uses to hire a new faculty member with tenure when that faculty member has gone through a regular search process. These procedures also meet the *Faculty Handbook* guidance that candidates identified through noncompetitive searches must be reviewed using the procedures for competitive searches.