

ROPA tenure review recommendations and ideas

The following items are suggestions from the ROPA EDI Workgroup, composed of musicians performing in ROPA orchestras across the United States, intended to support orchestras in developing and enhancing transparent, equitable, and constructive tenure review processes that clearly define expectations while fostering growth, communication, and success for all musicians

1. Prior to the start of the probationary period, a digital welcome packet, collaboratively developed by orchestra management, the orchestra committee, and the local union, should be distributed to the probationary musician(s) that contains the following materials:
 - a. The current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and orchestra bylaws
 - b. Information about the local union, including dues, wage scales, and steward contacts
 - c. An overview of workplace policies, expectations, and available resources
 - d. A clear description of the tenure review process
2. Before or at the start of the probationary period, an orientation meeting should be held with the probationary musician(s) and representatives of the orchestra committee, local union, and management with the following objectives:
 - a. Clearly explain the tenure review process and timeline
 - b. Review the rights and responsibilities of the probationary musician(s), including representation in any meeting with management and/or the Music Director
 - c. Provide an opportunity for questions and clarification
3. The probationary period should:
 - a. Support the integration of the probationary musician(s) into the orchestra
 - b. Provide a mutual learning experience between the musician(s) and the ensemble
 - c. Offer clear opportunities for professional growth and improvement
 - d. Allow for fair and job-related evaluation aligned with the orchestra's artistic and professional standards

4. To accommodate the wide range of schedules and service structures across ROPA orchestras, the following suggestions for the probationary period may be considered:
 - a. The length, structure, and evaluation timeline should be clearly communicated to the probationary musician(s) at the start of employment
 - b. Flexibility in the percentage of services, number of weeks, and number of concert cycles or productions should be considered when establishing suitable timelines for evaluation
 - i. For a two-season probationary period, feedback meetings are suggested at a minimum of every six months
 - ii. For a one-season probationary period, feedback meetings are suggested every two to three months
 - iii. For orchestras that perform a limited number of weeks or productions, feedback meetings are recommended at least every other applicable concert cycle or production in which the probationary musician performs in the role for which they were hired
5. Prior to the start of their first contract, each probationary musician should be informed of available local union advocacy and support (including contact information for the union steward) and assigned a tenured musician representative who should:
 - a. Be selected or approved by the orchestra committee, with the consent of both the probationary musician and the representative
 - b. Serve as a point of guidance, support, and communication throughout the probationary period
 - c. Help the probationary musician navigate expectations, feedback, and concerns
 - d. If a dedicated tenure representative is not available, ensure that the union - through a steward, officer, or member of the orchestra committee - checks in with the probationary musician at least twice during the probationary period to provide support and maintain open lines of communication

6. In establishing tenure review committee membership and procedures, potential conflicts of interest should be identified and addressed prior to the election or appointment of committee members, with the goal of preserving the integrity, fairness, and credibility of the evaluation process
 - a. Individuals involved in evaluating probationary musicians should be free of actual or perceived conflicts of interest
 - b. Conflicts of interest may include but are not limited to the following: spouses, family members, domestic partners, significant others, teachers, and/or musicians who also auditioned for the position
 - c. Committee members with prior professional or personal relationships with a probationary musician may recuse themselves or have their voting privileges limited or removed, as determined by the rest of the committee in accordance with their existing procedures
 - d. Clear and transparent procedures should be established for identifying, disclosing, and resolving conflicts of interest
7. The probationary musician(s) should be informed in advance of all evaluation criteria, which may include:
 - a. Technical proficiency (e.g., intonation, rhythm, tone, articulation)
 - b. Ensemble skills and awareness
 - c. Ability to follow the conductor and their principal (if applicable)
 - d. Leadership skills (when applicable)
 - e. Musicality and artistry
 - f. Professionalism, preparedness, and collegial conduct
 - g. Responsiveness to feedback and demonstrated growth
8. If a probationary musician performs work outside the role, instrument, and/or part for which they were hired, acceptance of such work should not negatively affect the evaluation of their performance in their probationary position

9. A process of shared feedback should be established that is transparent to the probationary musician(s), Music Director, orchestra committee, local union, relevant musician committee(s), and section members (if applicable)
10. To support a fair, transparent, and constructive feedback process, the following principles and practices should guide the content, format, and delivery of feedback provided to the probationary musician(s):
 - a. Feedback should be constructive, direct, specific, and job-related
 - b. Written feedback is strongly preferred, with both the probationary musician and the local union as recipients
 - c. Clear procedures should define who drafts, reviews, and delivers written feedback
 - d. Careful consideration should be given to whether comments are attributed or anonymized, in addition to whether they are presented verbatim or as a summary
 - e. The probationary musician(s) should be permitted and encouraged to have union representation and/or other appropriate support during feedback meetings, in accordance with existing procedures
11. The probationary musician(s) should be informed in advance of who is responsible for determining tenure decisions, which may include:
 - a. The Music Director
 - b. A joint process involving the Music Director and a tenure review committee
 - c. Clearly defined voting structures and allocation between the Music Director and the tenured musicians in the orchestra

12. The final tenure review should occur within a clearly defined timeframe, and the probationary musician(s) should receive timely written notification of the decision to grant tenure, extend probation, or deny tenure
 - a. If the probationary period is extended, the rationale should be clear, warranted, and justifiable, and an updated timeframe should be provided and followed
 - b. If tenure is denied, the reasons should be outlined transparently and completely, and the probationary musician(s) may be offered the opportunity to appeal the decision should they wish to do so in accordance with existing outlined procedures
13. For further discussion, guidance, or assistance in developing or refining tenure review processes tailored to an individual orchestra's needs and contractual framework, ROPA member orchestras are encouraged to consult the ROPA EDI Workgroup in an advisory capacity