

**University Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee
Final Report
April 2023**

The URPT met weekly during the first three months of 2023, reviewing 6 Mandatory cases and 13 Random cases. As directed in the appointment letter, the members of the committee “review[ed] the RPT process” and submitted “written evaluations” of both the Mandatory and Random cases. The evaluations of the Random cases are not “official,” as per the letter. What follows is the “written report of the process review.”

Issue -- The URPT committee purpose

Recommendation 1: The committee needs to be provided clarification of its purpose and impact.

The committee discussed at length its role in the RPT process. As the only part of the process without a say in the cases, the committee found it challenging to discern the scope of its charge. Alternate possibilities were either to adopt a strict minimalist approach, which would simply identify violations of policy, or to take a broader look at matters that may not violate policy but that could be improved by training or policy changes. The latter approach seemed to make the committee most useful and has been adopted.

Issue -- URPT effectiveness

Recommendation 2: The committee would like to know what steps have been taken to address the recommendation of past URPT committees. What was their effectiveness?

Many of the issues identified in our review were also presented in the final reports of URPT in years 2018 to 2022. We would like to know more about what steps have been taken in response to those reports.

The Committee discussed the continuity of RPT process review from year to year. Issues often reappear and there is little explanation at the start of the committee’s work what steps have been taken to address the recommendations from past committees. Such an explanation would be helpful in providing the committee with a broader picture of the entire process of which it is a part.

The URPT committee meetings should take place in person, not virtually or hybrid.

Issue -- Material sent to External Evaluators:

Recommendation 3: Department heads need to be consistent with university guidelines in specifying in the letters sent to External Evaluators of the materials being sent. Material that does not speak to the candidate’s stature in the profession should generally not be submitted to evaluators (e.g., Student Evaluations)

The topic of the use of external letters was noted in a number of cases. The committee believes that these letters might be more clear to subsequent readers if it is known exactly what work the letters are evaluating. The letter sent by the Department Head (DH) indicates that a portfolio of scholarly work by the candidate will be attached, and the content of the portfolio sent varies widely among academic units, some of whom send the entire dossier. The letter from the DH is not required to specify the items sent to the external reviewer. Absence of such information, however, can impede readers of the evaluative letters. It should be made clear from the start what material is being sent to the reviewers.

Issue -- DVF discussion reports

Recommendation 4: The range of comments in external letters or internal discussions should be acknowledged and explained in the DVF report. Negative votes or abstentions accompanying a totally positive DVF report should be noted.

DVF reports should summarize the discussion of the candidate. This should involve consideration of the external letters, which are usually written with great care. If there is no discussion of the letters, that should be noted and explained in the DVF report.

DVF assessments should express a “range of viewpoints.” If the discussion was not thus balanced, this general agreement should be specifically noted; extremely positive letters from department and college do not help the process. A supportive DVF letter accompanied by a negative vote is confusing and does not justify the outcome of the vote.

University regulations must be followed in preparing DVF, Department Head, College RPT, and the Dean’s reports.

Issue -- Selection of External Evaluators:

Recommendation 5: University should reconsider the rules and guidelines in selecting external evaluators.

The DH’s guidelines for recruiting outside letters suggests that a variety of sources is desired, although current regulations and guidelines do not agree at different levels and may confuse. Letters which come from the same institution or from individuals with professional or pedagogical connections to the candidate should be explained by the DH. **Perception of a conflict of interest** is possible if a DH or dean is co-PI or doctoral mentor of the candidate, and that fact should be mentioned in the DH’s letter.

Any evaluator who is not a full Professor does not meet university guidelines and should be explained.

Issue – What body of work is considered for RPT

Recommendation 6: It needs to be clear at all levels of evaluation what materials will count and what criteria used to evaluate the work and the stature of a candidate and how work done outside NC State will be weighed.

Faculty accomplishments were tallied in different ways. In some cases, only work done since the last promotion was counted. Or, only work done at NC State. Or, the total work of the candidate. It seemed at times that a private assurance of promotion shortly after hire had been made or understood, based on career accomplishments. Given that different situations may call for different benchmarks (e.g., a novelist might have a different pace of work from a physicist), this is a matter that can use some clarification.

The rationale for **early promotion** cases should be explained by both DH and Dean. If this matter has been discussed with the candidate at the time of hire, that should also be noted.

Issue – Criteria for Professional Faculty promotion

Recommendation 7: Track-specific guidelines for Professional Faculty reappointment and promotion should be clarified at all levels.

The status of Professional Faculty has been better formalized in the last few years, but their promotion process may still follow or be affected by the pattern of Tenure Track faculty procedures. The various roles of Professional Faculty should explicitly be taken into account.

Issue – Description of Scholarship:

Recommendation 8: It is essential that the candidate know clearly what will count as *scholarship*, and how much is needed.

The traditional division of faculty work into Scholarship, Teaching, and Service sometimes replaces the word “Scholarship” with other terms, such as “Discovery of Knowledge through Discipline-Guided Inquiry,” or simply “Innovation.” The committee thinks that this (and unsuccessful mentoring) may lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the candidate regarding just what sort of work is required for advancement.

Collaborative work and publications should be explained in the candidate dossier in order to specify how much of the work was the candidate’s.

Issue – Teaching Evaluations:

Recommendation 9: The administration should reconsider inclusion of student teaching evaluations in the dossier without context.

The validity of student numerical evaluations has often been shown to be skewed by many factors (gender, race, nationality & accent, age). Their inclusion in faculty promotion cases is questionable. It is noted that they are used against candidates, but rarely for them. Research faculty may be hurt by the inclusion of these evaluations.

The number of student responses to evaluation of teaching may be small, and this is often noted. Nevertheless, these numbers, invalid as they are acknowledged to be, are sometimes mentioned regardless and are usually included in the dossier. An acceptable percentage of response should be agreed upon and named *in advance* by the unit. If fewer students respond, the evaluation should be completely discarded.

Teaching evaluation figures sometimes occupy an undue proportion of the candidate dossier, swelling it to unmanageable size.

Issue -- Peer review of teaching

Recommendation 10: DH should anticipate peer review of teaching and schedule the reviews so as to avoid last minute evaluations.

Peer review is often done as an afterthought at an inappropriate time in the semester when it can have little effect. It should be more than one more box to check off, and the pairing of faculty and peers should be thoughtfully undertaken well in advance by the DH.

Issue – Alignment of standards and dossier format:

Recommendation 11: Excessive standardization may be undesirable, but the principals in a case (DVF, DH, Dean) should be well versed in the relevant rules of their unit(s), and should be required to do mandatory training.

Each candidate confronts **three coexisting levels of standards** for promotion (departmental, college, and university). (In the rare case when promotion and tenure are sought separately, these may be six sets of standards.) The standards (university, college, departmental) may not align perfectly, leaving departmental standards to vary widely.

Several faculty dossiers did not follow the proper **dossier format** indicated by the dossier template. All rubrics indicated for faculty dossiers should appear, even when they contain no information.

While a candidate should have considerable leeway in making a case, some inclusions in the dossier may be inappropriate. Limits should be clearly set.

The **DH is responsible** for signing off on the dossier and should certify its form.

Covid Impact Statements were often missing, even where mention of the impact was made in candidate statements. The Covid rubric should be present, like other rubrics, even if it repeats information found elsewhere or contains no information. The university response to Covid is to increase “flexibility,” but it is not clear what that means in specific cases.

The current template for URPT reporting on random cases is misleading, containing place-holders and boiler-plate that should not appear in the URPT committee’s reporting. The template needs editing.

Respectfully submitted,
For the Committee,
Hans Kellner, Chair
Professor *emeritus* of English
Past Chair, NCSU Faculty 2013-15, 2019-21