

Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Process

Frequently Asked Questions

Fall 2023

1. If a split recommendation is sent forward on a particular action by one of the reviewers (e.g., reappointment as associate professor with tenure, but no promotion), can the candidate dispute part of the split recommendation?

The policy allows the candidate to rebut each negative recommendation made during the review process. Using the above example, the candidate could rebut the recommendation for “no promotion” and could also dispute a “no reappointment” recommendation. (See Policy and Procedures Letter 2-0902, Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Process for Ranked Faculty, Section 3.03d, for details.)

The candidate will have three (3) working days following receipt of the Statement of Recommendation to formulate a response no longer than 1,000 words. The candidate will submit their response to the next higher level in the review process.

2. Is it possible for a faculty member to be reappointed with tenure at the assistant professor level?

Awarding tenure at the rank of Assistant Professor is not an option allowed within the current framework of the Policy and Procedures Letter 2-0902 (P&P 2-0902).

3. Multiple questions are raised about use of external peer review letters required for all tenure and promotion cases. The following statements clarify the questions concerning the external peer review process:

The candidate chooses whether or not to waive their right to read the external peer review letters and indicates their choice by signing the waiver form (included as Attachment 2 in P&P 2-0902) before external peer review letters are sent. A copy of the waiver form should be included with the material sent to reviewers. Further, a copy of the signed waiver form should be included in the documentation file with the letters.

If the candidate neglects to sign the waiver form after repeated requests from the unit administrator, the default stance is that the candidate has access to any external peer review letters received and the reviewer should be so advised. At least one such request from the unit administrator should be a written notice containing a date after which the default position will be taken by the department. Copies of all such written requests are to be included in the documentation file. (See Question 9 below for further comments.)

Support letters written by faculty and administrative personnel from across OSU’s campuses can be included in the candidate’s documentation file, but these letters do not qualify as external peer review letters.

As mentioned in the policy, the candidate should be asked to provide a slate of names and the unit administrator and/or unit personnel committee should also provide names. From these two (2) lists a group of names should be selected in a fair and objective manner. A random selection process does not qualify as a “fair and objective manner.”

If the candidate fails to provide a slate of names of potential reviewers, then the process will continue with letters requested only from reviewers identified by the unit administrator and/or unit personnel committee.

The candidate should be provided with a copy of the body of the letter and materials sent to the reviewers. In the event the candidate waives their right to see the peer review letters, the actual names of the reviewers should not be provided to the candidate. Of course, if the candidate does not waive their right to see the peer review letters, the identity of the reviewers will be known once the review process is complete. Additionally, the “fair and objective” method used to select peer reviewers should be consistent for all candidates in a department.

At least three (3) letters are required for candidates considered for promotion and/or tenure; therefore, it is suggested requests be sent to more than three (3) reviewers. If more than three (3) responses are received, all letters should be included in the candidate’s documentation file.

If the waiver of access form was signed by the candidate at the beginning of the RPT process, the peer review letters should be removed from the documentation file when materials are returned to the college/department. These confidential letters should be retained in a separate, secure location for a minimum of three (3) years.

4. When a faculty member *has waived* the right to see their peer review letters and a Statement of Recommendation is being written, how should an OSU reviewer (departmental committee/unit administrator/college-level committee/dean) relate comments to statements made in specific peer review letters?

If a faculty member has waived their right to see written peer responses, it is not appropriate to use any reference (name, institution, etc.) that would allow identification of the peer reviewer. It would be appropriate; however, to code the letters, i.e., Peer Ltr. #1, #2, etc., so comments made in a particular letter can be referenced, if need be, in a Statement of Recommendation being written by an OSU reviewer. The code for the letters is to be included as part of the documentation file in the section for the peer review letters in order to expedite reading the materials.

If a faculty member has not waived their rights to see peer review responses, there is no need to code letters for reference of comments since the faculty member has full access to read/review all responses received.

5. If a negative recommendation is given, and the candidate has not waived their right to access the letters, does the candidate get to see the letters before providing a rebuttal?

Yes. In fact, if the candidate has not waived their right to access the peer review letters, the candidate should be informed when the letters are received and where they can be accessed for viewing, independent of any recommendation.

6. Is it permissible for a unit administrator to include documentation for a sanction/disciplinary action in the RPT documentation file?

Yes, the policy states that “sanctions in the personnel file shall be included” in the documentation file (Section 3.03.b.(4)).

7. When the Statement of Recommendation is prepared by the departmental personnel committee or the college-level committee, can a minority report be included?

Yes. The committee members belonging to the minority will decide if they want to include a minority report within the Statement of Recommendation developed by the departmental and/or college-level committee.

If a minority report is included, the majority and minority reports should be contained within the one Statement of Recommendation and should be clearly titled as the “Majority Report” or “Minority Report.” The arguments provided in each section should include a frank discussion of the positive and negative findings of respective committee members.

8. When the Statement of Recommendation is prepared by the departmental and/or college-level committee, how should the vote of the group be recorded?

The Statement of Recommendation should include the vote for the recommended action, as well as the signature of each committee member. For example, rather than indicating a ‘split’ vote occurred, the actual vote for the recommended action should be recorded (5 for, 2 against, 1 abstention); however, the recommendation should not state how each person voted. Committee members must be able to freely discuss a candidate without fear of repercussion or negative impact on their professional relationships with colleagues. In order to achieve this, the discussions and the vote of the individual members shall remain confidential.

9. What steps should be taken if a faculty member/candidate refuses to submit needed RPT documents and/or sign the waiver for access to peer review letters?

The unit administrator should provide the faculty member with written notification that certain documents must be complete. If multiple letters must be sent seeking a response, the text should increase in severity with each letter sent. Normally the third and final warning would include a hard deadline for submission/completion of materials. If the candidate continues to ignore the request, the process will continue without input from the candidate. (See Question 3 regarding an unsigned waiver form.) Additionally, copies of the letter(s) sent to the candidate, and any response(s) received, should be included in the candidate’s documentation file.

10. What constitutes a “college-level” review committee?

A college-level review committee consists of members of its tenured faculty elected by its tenured and tenure-track faculty, representative of the disciplines within the college and chosen by a process agreed upon by the college faculty and administration for the purpose of reviewing documentation files of candidates in that college. Further, such a committee is charged with examining the documentation contained in the RPT packet and determining if the review by the unit personnel committee and unit administrator has been consistent with departmental and college level policies. Where so specified, the college-level committee may also be charged with including in their recommendation a professional opinion about the qualifications and merit of the candidate for reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure. The committee will provide a formal, written recommendation to the dean of the college regarding the appropriate action for each candidate under consideration.

11. Does the policy statement allow a candidate to rebut the decision of the Provost, if the first negative decision is made at this level?

No.