

## Simpson College

### Guidelines for Faculty Serving on Formative and Mid-probationary Reviews

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#### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to faculty members serving on review committees as part of the FPC process.

#### Committee Membership and Roles for Annual Formative Reviews in Years 1, 2, 4, and 5

The review committee in years 1, 2, 4, and 5 will normally include the department chair (who chairs the review committee,) a tenured member of the department, and one tenured faculty member from outside of the department. The procedure for selecting committee members is outlined in Part III, Section 2 of the Faculty Handbook.

The purpose of the formative review is to provide the untenured faculty member information on their perceived strengths and continuing areas for development. The formative review does not result in a decision to reappoint the individual. The formative review assumes reappointment and answers the question, “What information would be helpful for the untenured faculty member so that she or he might better understand how they measure against the criteria for tenure and promotion?”

**The Committee Chair:** The department chair will chair the committee, schedule meetings and normally write the letter that summarizes the review. The committee chair will also be responsible for keeping the process moving along according to the procedures and timeline. In addition the committee chair is charged with identifying and addressing any real or perceived conflict of interest among the members of the committee.

**The Departmental Faculty Member:** The faculty member from the department helps ensure that the material collected is representative of the work the faculty member under review has done in the department and provides the perspective of another departmental colleague.

**The Outside of the Department Faculty Member:** The faculty member from outside of the department helps keep the review process focused on the criteria and makes sure the result is helpful to the person undergoing review. The outside of the department faculty member is not to act as an advocate for the person, but rather help ensure that the final outcome is honest and truthful. The person undergoing review is more likely to accept the results of the review if she or he has chosen someone they trust to be a part of the process.

#### Committee Membership and Roles for Mid-probationary (typically in the third year) Reviews

The mid-probationary review provides an opportunity for the untenured faculty member to learn how she or he is doing against the criteria established for tenure and promotion from the point of view of colleagues and the institution midway to the tenure review.

It should be noted that in the mid-probationary review, the committee is not asked as individuals, or as a group to make a recommendation about the reappointment of the individual undergoing review. The committee's role is to gather and weigh the evidence presented against the criteria for tenure and promotion found in the Faculty Handbook. The review committee summarizes the evidence and provides the summary to the FPC. The FPC makes the actual recommendation to the dean about reappointment for the year following the mid-probationary review. This is a change from the old procedure and from that used for reappointment in years 1, 2, 4, and 5 when both the department chair and division head are asked for their recommendation about reappointment. The mid-probationary process is designed so that the relationship (good or bad) that has developed between the untenured faculty member and the department can be put into perspective by the FPC as it makes its recommendation to the academic dean. The procedures for the mid-probationary review can be found in Part III, Section 4 of the Faculty Handbook.

**The Committee Chair:** The FPC member assigned to the individual under review will chair the committee, schedule meetings, make arrangements for the outside evaluator, and normally write the letter that summarizes the review. The committee chair will also be responsible for keeping the process moving along according to the procedures and timeline. In addition the committee chair is charged with identifying and addressing any real or perceived conflict of interest and possible bias among the members of the committee. The committee chair should bring to the attention of the academic dean any such irregularities.

**The Department Chair:** The department chair provides the perspective of the department, and also someone who has likely been in a mentoring relationship with the person undergoing review during the years preceding the mid-probationary review.

**The Division Head:** The division head helps ensure that the material collected is representative of the work the faculty member under review has done in previous years.

**The Outside of the Department Faculty Member:** The faculty member from outside of the department helps keep the review process focused on the criteria and helpful to the person undergoing review. The outside of the department faculty member is not to act as an advocate for the person, but rather helps ensure that the final outcome is honest and truthful. The person undergoing review is more likely to accept the results of the review if she or he has chosen someone they can trust to be a part of it.

### **Expectations**

- Committee members must commit to reading the file and all materials collected for the review, and participate fully in the review. A faculty member should not accept a role in the review process, if she or he cannot participate objectively and fully.
- The response of the committee must be based on the criteria established in the Faculty Handbook for tenure and promotion.

- Committee members should wait until they have reviewed all of the evidence, visited class, and met with the candidate before forming an opinion about the success of the person undergoing review against the criteria.
- In both formative reviews and mid-probationary reviews, committee members are seeking to provide the person undergoing review both their strengths and the areas where improvement may be needed.
- All members of the review should focus their attention on the evidence that is gathered during the process and not use hearsay, previous contact with the individual, or other things extraneous to the process, color their views.
- The review letter is created by consensus, but it does not have to reflect unanimity in the committee. Different members of the committee may see different things in the evidence. All observations should be present in the summary letter, as should any disagreement in the committee. It is perfectly acceptable to report:

*“The review committee could not agree on whether or not Professor Smith was making sufficient progress in the area of professional development. Committee members within the field felt that two journal articles in well-known peer reviewed journals was sufficient at this stage of Professor Smith’s career. The other members of the committee would like to see more.”*

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Faculty members serving on review committees, no matter at what stage of the probationary process, must keep what they see and hear confidential. Committee members should not talk about the review, the data collected, or anything else that has to do with anyone outside of the committee. This applies especially to colleagues within the department who are not part of the formal process, and it also applies to family members. What is seen and heard as part of an FPC review must remain confidential forever and by agreeing to serve on a review committee, each faculty member is accepting this responsibility. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and faculty members breaching college expectations for confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action. Questions about confidentiality should be referred to the chair of FPC, or the academic dean.

### **Other**

It should be noted, that it is the expectation of the institution that the normal length of the probationary period for tenure-track faculty will be five years at which time the faculty member will come up for tenure review in their sixth year. This expectation means that reappointment, although not automatic, will likely be the normal practice though the fifth year. This will give non-tenured faculty members adequate time before the tenure review to address whatever problems surface in the reviews in years 1-5. That said, the college retains the right to not reappoint a faculty member in tenure-track contract following the procedures outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

All review committee members should be reminded that the review process is evidence based. This means that decisions must be made using the evidence collected for the review. This includes materials in the file, observations of teaching, discussions with the untenured faculty member, and other data that is collected as part of the review. Evidence that has been collected in

previous FPC reviews, may be considered by review committees if it is entered into the evidence base for the current review. For example, teaching evaluations from years one and two may be referenced as part of a mid-probationary review in year three, IF the untenured faculty member undergoing review is notified that such data is being included. This might be done by including the previous teaching evaluations in the mid-probationary file, or by simply referencing the evaluations in the summary letter. This might look like this:

*“For the purposes of this review, the committee reviewed the teaching evaluations of Professor Smith collected during his first and second years at the institution.”*

Such notification allows the untenured faculty member the opportunity to review and respond to all of the evidence used by the committee in creating the summary letter. Similarly, the review committees have access to the summary letters written by previous review committees and the summary letter written by the academic dean to the untenured faculty member which closes each year’s review process. It is also the case that actions or conversations with the candidate that have taken place before the review period may be a part of the review, IF the matter is brought into the review process by way of a conversation with the candidate during the review. This might look like this:

Committee Member A (someone in the candidate’s department) in conversation with the candidate,

*“John, two years ago when you first arrived, we discussed a complaint a student expressed to me regarding your missing so many class periods. I don’t see anything in your file regarding this issue in recent years. Tell me a little bit about the steps you have taken to address this concern.”*

This issue may find its way into the current review letter, like this:

*“During his meeting with him, Committee Member A asked John how he had addressed a student complaint of some years ago about John missing class. John said that in recent years, he has reduced the number of his absences by finding a place to stay in town during inclement weather. The committee is satisfied that this problem has been resolved.”*

In other words, as long as the candidate is made aware of the issue and has had a chance to address the issue during the review process, it can be part of the information used by the committee.