



University of Kentucky
Office of the Provost

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MEMORANDUM

To: Academic Area Advisory Committee Members

From: David W. Blackwell, Ph.D.
Provost

Subject: Policies, Practices and Guidelines

Date: October 1, 2019

Thank you for your willingness to serve on one of the University academic area advisory committees. These advisory committees provide advice to the Provost on matters involving promotions and/or the granting of tenure.

Our regulations state that the Provost shall *require* a written evaluation from the appropriate academic area advisory committee for all cases in which the individual under review has not received the near-unanimous support from all lower-level reviewers (external letter writers, unit faculty, educational unit administrator, college advisory committee, and dean). Because of the varying size of review bodies and the spectrum of support frequently expressed in individual letters, we intentionally provide no guidance as to the definition of “near-unanimous.” Opinions against the promotion and/or the granting of tenure, and the decisions that may follow from the gravity of those opinions, are among the most difficult judgments we are called upon to make. Timely and thoughtful advice from advisory committees is invaluable. An advisory committee may *elect* to submit a written evaluation on a case for which an evaluation is not required. In recent years, some academic area committees have chosen to at least designate a primary reviewer to verify the unanimity or near-unanimity of lower-level reviewers in the context of an area advisory committee’s perspective. Again, given the gravity of the decision being reached, this practice, while not required, is encouraged.

I welcome academic area advisory committee evaluations on any case. However, I most appreciate advisory committee judgments in cases that lack a clear consensus among reviewers internal to a college and external to the University. Ultimately, the University’s achievements and national stature will be determined by the quality of its faculty, and the guidance provided by advisory committees serves the long-term interests of departments and colleges that seek to deliver quality educational and research programs and thereby further elevate the stature of the University.

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As you undertake this important assignment, your work should be guided by the following considerations.

The academic area advisory committee's review of the dossier:

- Read the [Administrative Regulation](#) (AR 2:1-1) on appointment, promotion and the granting of tenure, and the [Administrative Regulation](#) associated with the candidate's faculty title series (Chapter 2, AR 2:2-1 through AR 2:10).
- The evaluation of a faculty employee's performance in each area of assigned activity should be commensurate with his or her approved distribution of effort agreements. Excellence in all areas of assigned activity is expected. *All reviewers should be guided by the statements in letters submitted by outside evaluators and the unit faculty that address the faculty employee's performance relative to the unit's approved Statements of Evidence.* Therefore, the advisory committee members are asked to read and carefully evaluate the letters of recommendation submitted by the unit faculty and faculty evaluators from outside the University.
- Read and carefully evaluate the letters of recommendation submitted by the unit administrator, the college advisory committee (as applicable), and the dean of the college. If the individual under review has an assignment in an institute or multidisciplinary research center, the unit director is also required to submit a letter of evaluation on the work performed in the institute or multidisciplinary research center. Please pay particular attention to any contextual information those letters may provide about unique expectations in the candidate's discipline or other information particular to the candidate's dossier.
- Read and carefully evaluate all other materials in the candidate's dossier.

The academic area advisory committee's letter of recommendation:

- The letter of recommendation from the advisory committee shall provide a detailed statement of the opinions of the committee, pro and con, on the candidate as well as the numerical vote (e.g., 4 to 1 in favor of promotion) of the participating committee members. The advisory committee's letter must be rigorous but balanced. The letter should include not only a thoughtful analysis of the candidate's record of past performance but also an evaluation of the prospect for the candidate's *continued* productivity.

N.B. A member of an advisory committee shall be excluded from any participation in that committee's consideration of a dossier in which both the candidate under review and the committee member hold a primary academic appointment in the same educational unit or involve an individual with whom an advisory committee member has even a remote familial tie.

Finally, academic area advisory committees are asked to adhere strictly to the following policies and practices:

- Maintain strict confidentiality about all cases under review. Now that we have migrated to use of a secure SharePoint site for key components of dossier review among academic area advisory committees, confidentiality of records should be enhanced and travel to view dossier content should be minimal. (Area Committee Chairs: Please note that the full content of all dossiers is always available for your review by contacting Ms. Margaret Leach, Director of Faculty Records.)
- Do not use the review process as an opportunity to voice a personal opinion about the direction of a program or college. Judgments made about each candidate should be focused solely on the professional qualifications of the candidates. Your recommendation should not be influenced by your opinions about whether the educational unit should be hiring someone in a particular area or on the directions in which a program should develop. Such decisions have already been made and, although some faculty members may attempt to continue the debate, you should not be distracted by these policy issues.
- Do not evaluate personalities. Please be cautious not to be influenced by personality issues that have nothing to do with the candidate's professional qualifications or record of accomplishment.
- Do not assume that extramural funding alone is a proxy for scholarship.

The letter's statements should reflect the basis for the judgments made and demonstrate the advisory committee's commitment to fairness. Advisory committees may use the expression "some of us share the view" to express the majority view or even disparate views among the members. Kentucky's Open Records Law does not abridge the advisory committees' right to express their opinions. Phrases in the letter such as "in our opinion" will differentiate expressions of informed opinion, which is the legitimate role of the advisory committee following full review of and deliberation about the materials, from an assertion of fact. Advisory committees may find it helpful to include a statement such as, "In accordance with the University's regulations, we are providing our advice on the case of Professor X." The advisory committee's letter is part of the official file of the appointment, promotion, or tenure proposal and will be placed in the candidate's Standard Personnel File after the review process is concluded.

Please note that the calendar of process this year has been somewhat compressed in an attempt to reach decisions on promotion and/or tenure earlier than in years past. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

In conclusion, you play an important role in the tenure and/or promotion process, and your opinions will be given considerable weight. If you need additional information or assistance, the advisory committee chair should contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement.

cc: G.T. Lineberry

DWB/gtl/ac

2019-2020 Calendar of Process

Fall	Colleges review dossiers and make recommendations for promotion and tenure
January 10	Recommendations for promotions and tenure due in the Office of the Provost
January 24	Recommendations sent to the respective University Academic Area Advisory Committee
March 6	University Academic Area Advisory Committees submit recommendations to the Provost
March 27	Letters to deans notifying them of final decisions