

# Guidance on the Promotion and Tenure Process

January 4, 2022<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Original version was January 30, 2016 with previous revisions dated 12/1/16, 4/6/16, 6/6/17, 10/17/17, 3/16/18, 5/18/18.

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## Office of Faculty Affairs

Updated January 4, 2022

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## Introduction

The reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) process requires the utmost care and attention from all faculty and staff involved because of its central importance to the quality of education and the careers of individual faculty members. This guide aims to strengthen the quality of information that goes into the RPT process and to reinforce consistency of information across candidates. As a procedure rather than policy document, it supplements the *Faculty Handbook* sections on this process.

After a few general topics, the order of the sections of this guide follows the order in which documents are produced in the process. In general, the critical review process follows the same procedures as the promotion and tenure processes, except that external letters are not required. The last section describes the process for tenure-on-hire.

## Confidentiality of the Process

The President's final decision on reappointment, promotion, and tenure cases is informed by votes, recommendations, and discussions at several earlier stages of the internal evaluation process. *Confidentiality throughout the process is required and imperative.* Candidates are not to be told the outcome of the deliberation until the President has made a determination. At the discretion of the chair or dean, informal discussions with the candidate may be appropriate at intermediate stages, but only about the process of these deliberations, and not the anticipated outcome or anything related to confidential discussions.

After the President's decision is made, the candidate may request a redacted copy of the full file from the Office of Faculty Affairs by submitting a request to [facultyaffairs@gatech.edu](mailto:facultyaffairs@gatech.edu). Faculty Affairs removes from these files all references to external letters, including the selection of letter writers, the identity of those who wrote, quotations from the letters, and the letters themselves, to provide confidentiality for this externally solicited advice. At that time, school chairs or unit heads<sup>2</sup> may review the redacted file with the candidate; they must still take care not to reveal the contents of the letters or the confidential discussions that took place in the meetings that informed the documents in the file. Following third-year Critical Review, the school or college should provide the full package as there are no external letters.

## When the "Tenure Clock" Starts

What is colloquially known as the "tenure clock" is called the "probationary period" in the *Faculty Handbook*. Appointment letters specify the academic year when individuals are eligible to be considered for tenure and when they are required to be considered for tenure (the "can" and "must" years). The "can" year is the fifth year on the tenure track and the "must" year is the sixth. If any years of credit toward tenure are awarded, the initial letter of appointment must specify this, including for untenured associate professors. Three years of credit toward tenure (the maximum allowed under Board of Regents [BOR] policy) allow individuals to come up for consideration in their second year at Georgia Tech, although school chairs may advise candidates to wait longer to establish themselves in the Tech

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<sup>2</sup> Unit heads are generally school chairs, except in colleges without schools, where the dean serves in this role or designates an associate dean to do so. This document uses the terms unit head and school chair interchangeably.

environment. When individuals start service after October 15 of an academic year, that year is not counted toward the tenure timeline; the “clock” starts the following academic year. (see *BOR Academic Affairs & Student Affairs Handbook* section 4.4.1 for details)

## When to “Come Up”

(See *Faculty Handbook* section 3.3.6 for details.)

BOR rules and the Faculty Handbook allow for individuals to be considered for promotion with a minimum of four years in grade and to be considered for tenure with a minimum of five years of service. The normal time for assistant professors to go up for tenure and promotion is in their sixth year of service. Similarly, the sixth year of service is considered the normal time for promotion from associate to full professor. It is generally expected that candidates who go up for promotion prior to the normal time frame are exceptional in that they meet the normal criteria for promotion within an earlier time frame. The general expectation is that an individual will be considered for tenure only once, but a second request is acceptable practice; see the section of this document on “coming up again.”

Once the minimum time-in-grade requirement has been met for an associate professor, the question of whether the individual is ready for promotion to full professor is a judgment call made jointly by the individual and the school chair. In Georgia Tech practice, if an individual requests to be considered for promotion to full professor after meeting the minimum eligibility requirements, the case must be put forward. Any questions about whether a faculty member is eligible for review should be discussed with the Office of Faculty Affairs before the process starts. Candidates may be put forward for promotion with less than the required minimum four years of grade with strong justification and prior permission from the President before the promotion documentation is submitted.

## The Coversheet

The candidate profile and coversheet is generated via the [PROMOTE system](#). At the start of the process, typically the spring before the candidate goes up, the unit/college contact adds the candidate to the PROMOTE system and enters the information on the coversheet. All coversheet information must then be confirmed among the unit, college, and Faculty Affairs. The coversheet specifies when the probationary period (“tenure clock”) started for untenured faculty and any extensions through approved leaves of absence. The number of years that the individual spent in a non-tenure-track position before starting the probationary period are also indicated, along with any credit toward the “can” year determined at the time of hiring. To protect the privacy of health-related information, the reason for approved extensions of the probationary period should never be included, either on the coversheet or in the discussion of the case at any level. Votes and recommendations from the internal evaluation of the file are recorded on the coversheet as the process moves forward, with secure electronic entry of votes by or on behalf of committee chairs, school chairs, deans, Provost, and President.

## Candidate Materials

Each candidate prepares several documents that form the basis for the file: a bio-sketch, a personal narrative, a *curriculum vitae*, and a table of normalized Course Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS scores).<sup>3</sup> In addition, the candidate submits three to five examples of relevant creative work. The unit head or school RPT committee chair may provide guidance and advice to the candidate in preparing these documents to help ensure that the document communicates well to an interdisciplinary audience, states clearly the importance and impact of the candidate's work, is accurate, and neither over-represents nor under-represents the candidate's accomplishments. Candidates upload the components of the dossier into the PROMOTE system, certify that their documents are complete, and indicate on the access waiver whether or not they forego their rights to see the external letters.

The Faculty Handbook provides a broader spectrum of criteria for evaluating creativity for promotion and tenure than is usually considered in specific disciplines. In unusual cases where a candidate would like to use a more expanded view of creativity than is typical in their discipline, they may consider using the guidance given in Appendix A to build their package. In addition, Appendix B provides information on how to include the effects of Covid-19 on a candidate's career progression.

### Bio-sketch<sup>4</sup>

The file should begin with a brief bio-sketch for the candidate that is designed to introduce the candidate to a general audience. The bio-sketch will always be the first item that appears (after the coversheet) in the file that goes to the Provost. So, it should receive particular attention as a summary of key information in the file. The bio-sketch should begin with the candidate's name, rank, and school; degrees; and history of time at Georgia Tech. It should then briefly explain the candidate's research area, including why it is important. A sentence or two on awards and impact may be included. The bio-sketch should be written in the third person, be no longer than 150 words, and be provided on a separate page. No picture of the candidate should be included in the bio-sketch or anywhere else in the file.

### Personal Narrative

Candidates must write a brief summary of their major accomplishments at Georgia Tech with regard to teaching, research, creativity, and service (see *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.8). This is the candidate's "voice" in the file, the place that provides an opportunity to explain context, significance, and impact. Candidates should point out innovative elements of their scholarship and educational contributions.

In terms of educational contributions, candidates should describe their teaching philosophies, educational innovations, and responses to teaching evaluations. A good resource for describing an effective narrative for educational contributions is the guidance given for "Reflection & Self-Evaluation" in the [Teaching Portfolio format](#) used for Lecturers. The narrative should also discuss their approaches

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<sup>3</sup> Some schools have their staff prepare the tables for the candidates' file. However, candidates should at least confirm the data.

<sup>4</sup> The biosketch is not required by the *Faculty Handbook* but has been the practice in some schools. As of 2014, it is being adopted for general use based on the recommendation of a cross-college task force.

and accomplishments for mentoring and training students and post docs in research, where appropriate.

The personal narrative should not merely summarize the examples of creative contributions but rather place them in the context of the school, college, Institute, and discipline. Candidates can use the personal narrative to clarify their contributions in collaborative work.

The *Faculty Handbook* requires that “these personal narratives shall be three to five pages with one-inch margins, standard single-spaced and 10-point minimum font.” Although some colleges have had longer formats in the past and split the three topics into separate statements, these formats are no longer being accepted for Institute-level review. The personal narrative may be written in the first or third persons.

## Curriculum Vitae

The *curriculum vitae* (CV) should be provided in the [Institute standard format](#), which is posted on the Faculty Affairs website. The format provides a top-level outline of key elements to be listed; colleges are free to fill in more detailed levels that are appropriate in their areas as long as they maintain the overall order (check individual college websites for this information). Unit heads or the faculty committee chairs should work with candidates to make sure that activities are reported in the correct categories, particularly peer-reviewed publications and grants as principal investigator, and ensure that collaborative efforts are appropriately represented.<sup>5</sup> The CV must include a table of contents and page numbers. The CV should not use a type font less than 11 points nor margins less than 3/4 of an inch. Using the standard format provides an easier means for evaluators to review the packages in a consistent manner; however, the *Faculty Handbook* does allow for some flexibility in format. Any deviations from the Institute standard format need to be reviewed by Faculty Development administrators or Faculty Affairs representatives in the unit/college or Institute level. If the candidate is worried about listing unfunded proposals or other awards or projects that may be in a nondisclosure phase in the CV sent to external reviewers, these may be put into an addendum to the CV and placed behind the CV for the internal reviews. The addendum should be signed and dated.

## Teaching and Training Assessment

The educational roles of the candidate should receive considerable attention in the file. The list of elements that appear in *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.7 Promotion and Tenure Evaluation provides a useful check list for what can be included as evidence of contributions as a teacher and educator. Some of these items can be listed, where appropriate, in the CV or in the personal narrative.

The teaching and training assessment section of the file should contain the summary table on CIOS scores. The Faculty Executive Board voted in March 2020 that all Colleges develop a second metric of teaching effectiveness<sup>6</sup>, which would be included in this section (the original targeted effective date of

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<sup>5</sup> Some units require candidates to indicate their percentage contribution for each publication.

<sup>6</sup> The details of the FEB motion is “Specifically, all programs must develop one method, in addition to CIOS reports, to evaluate faculty teaching. The additional method will be used going forward to generate performance data alongside CIOS reports for critical review, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review. The type of additional

AY 2022-2023 has been delayed due to the impact of Covid and needs to be re-determined). Faculty may optionally include additional evidence of teaching effectiveness as guided by the “Teaching Skills and Methods” entry in the *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.7 Promotion and Tenure Evaluation (limited to two pages). Candidates should prepare or supervise the preparation of their own tables of student evaluation scores from CIOS, limited to the last five years for promotion from associate to full professor. A format is available on the [Faculty Affairs website](#). For the standard documentation, only the scores on the question “Is the instructor an effective teacher?” are required, but a separate table with others is encouraged. At the top of the table, a section for normative data on the “effective teacher” question for the candidate’s college and school (i.e., subject abbreviation such as MATH or ISYE) should appear, to provide the appropriate context for the numbers in the table. This information will be posted on the Office of Assessment web site for the five years preceding the review as soon as the data become available. If a faculty member is teaching a cross-listed course that has a small number of students in each section, the faculty member may combine the scores using the standard table format and use the normative data for the combined size.

### Statement of Completeness

After candidates’ materials are complete, they should sign and date a Statement of Completeness. The form is available on the [Faculty Affairs website](#). Each document covered by the statement should be dated and should not change after the candidate signs the form. The candidate may provide an addendum to the CV at the start of the fall semester and in December before the file goes to Faculty Affairs in separate memos in the file with a specific date and clear information on what is being updated. The candidate should also sign and date these memos. These updates should be significant such as additional awards, grants, or publications.

### External Review

For promotion and tenure, external letters of evaluation are required.<sup>7</sup> A minimum of five letters is expected in each file. Because not every reviewer returns a letter in the end, units generally ask for more in order to make sure that at least five are available.

### Selection of Letter Writers

As specified in the *Faculty Handbook*, the school chair or unit head and candidate should jointly develop the list of external reviewers to ask. The process of selection should start with the candidate and the

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method may be driven by academic and program needs rather than by faculty evaluation processes. It is recommended that the findings in the Task Force for Teaching Effectiveness be reviewed as options are explored. The methods should be approved by the relevant faculty bodies. Timeline: a plan of action should be in place by Fall 2020. During AY 2021-2022, each unit should adopt its new method on a trial basis for formative evaluation and fine-tuning of the method itself. The revised evaluation process will be required for the AY 2022-2023 evaluation cycle.”

<sup>7</sup> See the [Faculty Affairs website](#) for the 2013 guidance memo from the Provost regarding the external review letters.

school chair independently developing lists of possible reviewers. School chairs or unit heads may consult with others in developing their lists, including school or unit promotion and tenure committees; local practices vary on this point. According to the *Faculty Handbook* (Section 3.3.8), “The final decision regarding who shall be selected to provide recommendations from the list shall rest with the Unit Head and the faculty committee.”

Reviewers should be “clear leaders in the field” of the candidate, such as full professors at equivalent or better institutions or senior leaders in industry research. Associate professors should be avoided, but if they are used, the unit should certify that they are tenured. All the academic reviewers should be from peer, near-peer, or stronger programs, with the understanding that the leading programs in particular fields may not always be located at top universities. The list should include international reviewers for promotion to full professor, though it is not required that a letter be received from an international reviewer. Conflicts of interest should be avoided; but if they exist, they must be declared in the letter. Doctoral or postdoctoral advisors may be asked to write letters, as long as they are clearly identified as such.<sup>8</sup> As the *Faculty Handbook* indicates, “Candidates may request that a particular individual not be contacted as an external reviewer.” (Section 3.3.8, External Peer Review)

The *Faculty Handbook* requires that the list provided by the candidate appears in the file, and the Provost asks that each file show clearly which names were suggested by the candidate, which by the chair or unit head, and which by both. The final selections should include a majority of names independently selected by the chair or unit head, regardless of whether these were also proposed by the candidate. In the end, the file should indicate which proposed reviewers were approached, which ones agreed to review (with the reason for declining if that is the case), and whether the review was returned.

The candidate and school chair or unit head will each add their list of external reviewers via the PROMOTE system, including short bio-sketches for the reviewers. These bio-sketches must be very short paragraphs (less than 100 words) and compiled in a list format. Files that do not use the template, have longer reviewer bio-sketches, or are not compiled will be returned to units for reformatting before they go to the Provost’s Advisory Committee, also known as the Institute Promotion and Tenure Committee.

## Waiver of Access

Before sending letters of request to the selected letter writers, the unit should have candidates sign the form that indicates whether or not they waive the right to see the letters. The letter requesting the external review must indicate which option the candidate chose. The form is available on the Faculty Affairs website (it is called [“Waiver Statement”](#)).

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<sup>8</sup> The *Faculty Handbook* (Section 3.3.8) instructs, “If the School Chair or Dean concludes that circumstances require use of that reviewer, the letter must be in addition to those normally required, identified as such, and filed separately from the other external letters. A justification for including the letter must be included in the package.”

## Approaching the Reviewers

The school chair or unit head should request the letters of review using the [standard template letter\(s\)](#) provided in [PROMOTE](#). These templates have an editable section where the chair or unit head may personalize the letter to a particular reviewer. Neither the chair, unit head, nor anyone else should make informal contacts beforehand to determine willingness. Instead, the initial approach should be a formal request with some materials attached that give adequate information on the candidate's substantive area, so that reviewers can make informed choices about whether they have the right expertise to do the review; for example sending the bio-sketch and a CV might be appropriate, whether or not the CV is in standard format. The full file can be provided later with a more detailed formal request. Maintaining this practice avoids the appearance that the chair or unit head is picking particularly positive or negative reviewers or unconsciously communicating the chair's or unit heads' expected outcome. It also helps assure that practices are consistent across campus.

Writers should be asked to focus on the candidate's scholarly and creative contributions; to offer information on professional service if they have it; and comment on teaching only if they have direct experience. They should be instructed that they should not give an opinion regarding promotion or tenure. Should the reviewer add such commentary anyway, it be ignored by any evaluators.

A particularly important part of the template is the wording approved by Georgia Tech's Office of Legal Affairs on confidentiality of the letters. If the candidate has waived the right to see the letters, Georgia Tech promises reviewers that it will keep their letters confidential to the greatest extent permitted by law. To complement Georgia Tech's legal efforts, the chair's or unit heads' letter asks reviewers to request confidentiality specifically in their letters. All of this language is critical to establish the credibility of the letters we receive.

## When the Letters Arrive

The External Reviewer List, the table that collects the information on reviewer nomination and selection, will be generated via the PROMOTE system. When the letter is submitted or uploaded by the unit administrator into the system, the letter will be labeled as "Reviewer 1," "Reviewer 3," etc. These identifiers should then be used instead of reviewer names in the internal review documents.

If candidates request copies of their files after the decision has been made, Faculty Affairs has to remove even these reviewer identifiers and all quotations from reviews before the file is given to the candidate (a process called "redacting"). To make this work cleaner, it would be helpful if the internal review included a separate "Analysis of Reviews" section rather than interweaving reviewer comments throughout. However, this separate section is not required.

## Internal Review

Each candidate's file goes through six stages of review, generally at least three by faculty and three by administrators, before reaching the President for a decision. Typically, 35 or more members of the tenured faculty have reviewed the file along the way. *Again, complete confidentiality is required and imperative throughout the process.* Table One, provided at the end of this document, summarizes the

structures and issues addressed in the document prepared at each stage. Occasionally, situations arise that may result in a need to change the process or documentation once the review has started. Examples are covered in the section “In-Process Changes.”

## Evaluation Criteria

The criteria for evaluation are set both by broad policies established by the BOR (Policy Manual Section 8.3.6) and the *Faculty Handbook* (Section 3.3.6; expanded upon in 3.3.7 and 3.3.8). The three areas are abbreviated as teaching, creativity, and service. Each area has several internal dimensions, which should be interpreted in ways that are appropriate to the individual faculty member’s field and circumstances. For example, the quantity and quality of doctoral student advising is important to include under teaching in many schools, but is much less relevant in those with small doctoral programs or none at all. Caution should be made when including information on indices of citations, such as an h-index. For example, Google Scholar has the disclaimer “Google does not warrant that the information is complete or accurate.” In addition, there have been several articles citing bias in the use of h-indices<sup>9</sup>.

The Faculty Handbook (3.3.4) notes that “Each instructional Unit should have a set of clearly defined and prioritized objectives defined in accordance with the mission of that Unit. The more clearly and specifically the objectives are articulated, the more precisely can an individual's capability and interest be compared to those objectives. The objectives are not static; however, they must be influenced or modified by factors such as changing enrollment patterns and changes in the unit's and Georgia Tech's mission within the University System of Georgia. Modifications in objectives typically occur gradually, not instantaneously, thus permitting faculty awareness of the changes.” The Faculty Handbook (3.3.8) also states that “Each College (or Unit within a College) should determine and publish appropriate measures of scholarly impact of Faculty candidates for Promotion and Tenure. Each Promotion and Tenure package should include an explicit discussion of the impact of the candidate’s scholarship relative to the College’s or Unit’s measure of impact.” These objectives and measures should be defined by the faculty of each school or unit; the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) or its equivalent should be in charge of their definition and publicization. These objectives should be broad enough to include all faculty members of the school or unit, some of whom may not produce scholarly or creative products that fit the traditional definitions of a school or unit’s discipline. See Appendix A for guidance on assessment of non-traditional or non-disciplinary scholarly and creative products.

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<sup>9</sup> Gender and the h index in psychology: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11192-015-1757-5.pdf>

Female authors get fewer citations in astronomy: <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2017/05/female-authors-get-fewer-citations-astronomy>

Racial disparities in science and publishing: <https://asapbio.org/racial-disparities>

Implications of sex disparities in the h-index for academic medicine:  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2781502>

## First-level Review

Some Georgia Tech units operate with a first stage of internal review of the candidate's files, before they reach the unit's Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee. Some units use a "specialist review committee" or "area committee" to review only the scholarly achievements. Others use a committee that reviews the whole file against all three criteria. First-level review committees reviewing jointly appointed faculty must include members from both units. The school chair appoints this committee, in consultation with the candidate and the school's or unit's RPT Committee to ensure that the members have the appropriate expertise. Non-Georgia Tech faculty are allowable if no appropriate Georgia Tech faculty are available for this first-level area committee. (See *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.8, Internal Peer Review.)

Regardless of the process that the unit uses for this first-level review, it should be applied consistently across candidates. The rationale for and scope of the first-level review process should be clearly articulated in a document available to all candidates in the school. Any first-level review process should be reported in writing to the next stage of faculty review, in a memo signed by all committee members. That report should be included in the file that goes to the Provost.

## School/Unit Committee<sup>10</sup>

The school or unit promotion and tenure committee undertakes the next stage of review. In some schools, this committee consists of all tenured faculty at or above the level sought by the candidate (for example, all associate, full, and Regents' professors for a candidate seeking promotion to associate professor). In other schools, the committee is a smaller subset of this group elected by the faculty, and in others, the school chair or unit head appoints the committee. The procedure used for selecting committee members should be consistent across cases. The procedure for establishing the committee should be described in a document available to all tenure-track faculty in the school.

All members of the committee are expected to attend its meetings, and everyone present is expected to vote. Members with conflicts of interest should recuse themselves from the deliberations as well as the vote, and be reported as recused. Conflicts can include family relationships; close collaborations; advisor-advisee relationships; business relationships; or marked personal or professional conflicts. Best practices, including Robert's Rules of Order, suggest that a committee member should not vote if not present during the discussion.

The committee should have the candidate's materials available well ahead of its deliberations, including the external letters. School or Unit committees must evaluate the candidate on all three criteria — teaching, creativity, and service — indicating clearly in their reports whether or not the candidate meets the standard for promotion or tenure in that unit with regard to that criterion. School or Unit and

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<sup>10</sup> In the Scheller College of Business, which does not have schools, the school/unit committee would be the College RPT Committee, and the chair's role would be the dean's.

college committees are expected to be aware of the broad flexibility in *Faculty Handbook* language with regard to creative activities:

While difficult to define precisely, creativity is characterized by the making of original and innovative contributions. The nature of the creative work must be appropriate to the individual's discipline...  
(Section 3.3.7)

In many cases, the “discipline” of the candidate may not be clearly defined or align with traditional disciplinary definitions, for example, people who work in transdisciplinary research. In such cases, the evaluation committees should invoke the broader flexibility in the *Faculty Handbook* with regard to evaluation of creativity. See Appendix A, for example.

The committee chairs at all levels are responsible for making sure that all committee members have been trained about the negative effects of unconscious bias on the promotion and tenure process. If committee chairs need assistance with training, they can request it from the Office of the Vice President for Institute Diversity. In addition, the committee chair is responsible for making sure that no inappropriate material is discussed or taken into account in the committee deliberations. All discussions about the candidates should be limited to the professional realm. There should be no discussions about personal matters, including, but not limited to, family and medical issues.

The school or unit committee reports its decisions in a letter addressed to the school chair or unit head and signed by the committee chair (or by every member of the committee if a school or unit policy requires this). Any conflicts of interest addressed in the committee’s work should be described. This document should provide detailed analysis of the candidate’s materials in relation to each of the three criteria: teaching, creativity, and service. The external letters should be discussed in a balanced way. Particular attention should be given to any negative comments. The votes of the committee (separate for promotion and for tenure) will be by secret ballot and will be recorded on the coversheet and in the committee’s letter, along with the date of deliberation. Where the vote is split (not unanimous), the views of members who voted with the minority should be represented in the letter if at all possible.

In cases where the unit convenes a meeting and vote of all faculty within the unit who are eligible to weigh in on the case BEFORE the committee votes, the discussions and votes from that meeting should be addressed in the committee letter.

Schools and units vary in their practices with regard to allowing the unit head to attend the discussions of the unit Promotion and Tenure Committees. This decision rests with the school or unit committee. If the school chair or unit does attend these meetings, it should be as a silent observer to ensure that the school or unit faculty make their own judgment on the case. The committee may allow the school chair or unit head to ask clarifying questions after the committee has made its decision. It is not acceptable practice for school chairs or unit heads to try to win the committee over to their judgments of the case, which they can convey with their own votes and letters.

## School Chair/Unit Head

With the analysis and vote of the school or unit committee in hand, the school chair or unit head writes a letter of evaluation addressed to the dean that covers all three criteria (teaching, creativity, and service). The evaluation of teaching should go beyond CIOS scores on a single question and present other CIOS scores and any qualitative evaluation that has been done. It should address quality (not just quantity) of advising. Per the Taskforce on the Learning Environment report, the chair's or unit head's letter should assess the quality of instruction and the learning environment created by the faculty member using all available CIOS data (not just the "effective teacher" question). The longer list of teaching elements provided in the *Faculty Handbook* (Section 3.3.7) provides a useful checklist for elements that may be included, for chairs as for candidates.

The chair's or unit head's letter recommends for or against promotion and for or against tenure, with separate votes where both decisions are being made. The recommendations are recorded on the coversheet. For joint appointments (meaning there is a financial commitment from both units), the school chairs or unit heads, "involved jointly shall provide recommendations. These recommendations will then be passed along to the next level(s) as appropriate." (*Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.8)

The school chair's or unit head's letter represents an independent judgment on these matters. To the extent that the criteria are evaluated differently from the approach the school or unit committee took, the basis for the judgment should be explained in the letter. The letter from the school chairs or unit head should explicitly address any issues in the selection of the external reviewers.

In cases where the school or unit convenes a meeting and vote of all faculty within the school or unit who are eligible to weigh in on the case AFTER the committee votes, the discussions and votes from that meeting should be addressed in the school chair's or unit head's letter.

The school chair's or unit head's letter should discuss the outcome of the candidate's Critical Review and issues addressed during Critical Review, and an explanation of how those issues have been overcome.

## College Committee

Each college has a standing Promotion and Tenure Committee. Colleges with schools should have representation from each school within the college on the committee. The procedure for establishing the committee can vary but should be posted in a place that is accessible to all faculty in the college.

Conflicts of interest should be avoided.<sup>11</sup> Any committee member with a conflict of interest should be recused prior to the discussion of the case, with the recused member's vote recorded as an abstention. At the discretion of the committee, the dean or an associate dean may attend its meetings in an observer status, asking only clarifying questions, but should never be an active participant. It is not acceptable practice for deans to try to win the committee over to their judgments of the case, which

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<sup>11</sup> As described earlier, conflicts can include family relationships; close collaborations; advisor-advisee relationship; business relationships; or marked personal or professional conflicts.

they can convey with their own votes and letters. All discussion about the candidates should be limited to the professional realm. There should be no discussion about personal matters, including, but not limited to, family and medical issues. All discussion about the candidate's file should cease once the vote has been taken.

The college committee also makes an independent judgment of the merits of the case in relation to all three criteria (teaching, creativity, and service) and expresses that judgment in a letter addressed to the dean. This letter does not need to repeat all the facts of the case or re-use language from the school/unit or school chair letters. To summarize the merits of the case, committees may refer to the bio-sketch, which is always the first document in the file after the coversheet. Where the college committee agrees with the earlier levels of reviews, the letter can note this fact briefly. Where the judgment differs, a full explanation should be provided.

The vote of the college committee is recorded on the coversheet and in the letter. These votes should be by secret ballot. Anyone who voted on the case in an earlier level of review should not vote but instead be recorded as a required abstention. Where the vote is split (not unanimous), the views of members who voted with the minority should be represented in the letter if at all possible. This letter should include the date of deliberation and be significantly shorter than any that preceded it (perhaps as short as two pages).

## Dean

The dean's letter, which is addressed to the Provost, should also be brief, focusing on what the dean sees as the main strengths or weaknesses of the case and where they agree with or differ from the previous levels of review. The dean's recommendation is recorded in the letter and on the coversheet.

## Order of the File at Institute Level

At the next stage of review, by the Provost's Advisory Committee (see next section), the number of cases being considered is very large — as high as 70-80 for promotion and tenure decisions and 40-50 for critical review. Every member of the Provost's Committee is expected to read every file. To provide for quality in their deliberations, it is important that the material be presented in a consistent way across cases.

As part of the standardization at this level, the materials must be presented in the following order:

- Coversheet
- Bio-sketch
- Dean's letter
- College letter
- Chair's letter
- School/unit letter
- First-level review report
- Teaching and training assessment
- Sample formal initial and follow-up request letters to external reviewers

- External letter selection template
- External reviewer bio-sketches
- External letters, in order by assigned number
- Candidate personal narrative
- Candidate standard CV, with table of contents and page numbers
- CV addendum with unfunded proposals and any projects/awards in nondisclosure phase
- Any updates to the CV, signed and dated by the candidate
- Signed statement of completeness
- Signed waiver of right to see letters

The PROMOTE system organizes the material as a single searchable PDF file, with each section in the list above bookmarked, as well as the major headings within the CV.

### **Provost Advisory Committee**

At the Institute level, the Provost is advised by a committee consisting of the deans and senior faculty from the colleges. Except for the inclusion of the deans, which is specified in the *Faculty Handbook*, the Provost determines the composition of the committee. It currently includes 14 members: six deans; one additional faculty member each from Computing, Design, Ivan Allen, and Scheller; and two additional faculty members each from Engineering and Sciences. The deans select the additional faculty to represent their colleges.

The Vice-Provost for Faculty currently chairs the meetings of this committee and determines the order of cases and structure of discussion. Anyone with a conflict of interest regarding a specific case is recused prior to and during the discussion and vote on that case. The deans explain the appropriate criteria for the various fields represented and present the cases from their colleges. The Vice-Provost may assign a member of the committee from outside the candidate's college to speak after the home dean. This person is referred to as the second speaker and speaks to whether the materials in the file support the recommended decision and whether the decision is consistent with the Institute's criteria. When the vote is taken, anyone who voted at a previous level (either school or college) must abstain. Voting is by anonymous, electronic ballot. However, the vote totals are recorded on the coversheet. All discussions and votes are confidential. All discussion about the candidates should be limited to the professional realm. There should be no discussion about personal matters, including, but not limited to, family and medical issues.

A brief summary of the discussion of the Provost's Advisory Committee is included in each dossier, but that committee does not write a letter for the file. The committee's votes are recorded on the coversheets.

The committee reviews promotion, tenure, and critical review cases. It also votes by electronic ballot on tenure-on-hire cases in a process described in a later section.

## Provost and President

As the *Faculty Handbook* describes, “The Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs considers all information that has been compiled, transmits the complete package along with their recommendations to the President...” The Provost makes a recommendation on each case. The President makes the final decision and notifies the BOR by the end of February, as the BOR requires. Both the Provost’s recommendations and the President’s decisions are reflected on the coversheets.

## In-Process Changes

**Stopping the Process:** If for any reason candidates want to withdraw from consideration, they may do so at any time in the process before the President makes a final decision, as indicated by a signature on the coversheet. The candidate should make the request to stop the review process in writing and should sign the request. The request should be delivered to the administrator at the level that would review it next, with a copy to the school chair and/or dean, Provost, and the Office of Faculty Affairs. *Any such decision should be discussed with the school chair and/or dean before making the request.* In the case of tenure, if it is the candidate’s “must year,” the candidate will receive a letter of non-reappointment with the last date of employment specified. The written request to stop the review process for tenure should state that the individual understands the last date of employment.

**Potential Discrepancies in the Record:** If the evaluators feel that there is a substantive factual discrepancy or uncertainty in the dossier, the evaluators should not make assumptions about those facts. Rather, they should seek clarification from the candidate and place any corrections to the dossier in the Additional Documents section.

**Late Recusal of Evaluator:** If an evaluator has a conflict of interest, they should recuse themselves from discussion (including removing themselves from the room) and should not vote on the case. Ideally, the conflict would be discovered prior to the evaluator having interactions on the case. If a situation arises where an evaluator needs to recuse themselves after they have been involved in the process, then care must be taken to remove their influence. For example, additional letters may be solicited, if possible, to supplement ones solicited by a School Chair or Unit Head who has recused themselves (along with identification of who solicited which letters). Another example would be to remove comments from any review letter made by someone who has recused themselves once the deliberations have started. The change in the process should be documented in one of the letters, including when it happened and what were the actions taken to remove the influence of the recused member.

## Communicating Results

When the decision is final, the President communicates the result to the faculty member in writing delivered through the dean’s office. After the candidate has received official notification, the dean or

school chair may review the decision with the candidate.<sup>12</sup> But the confidential aspects of the process remain confidential, including discussions in meetings of the faculty committees and the content and writers of external letters. As described earlier, for promotion and tenure decisions, the candidate may request a redacted copy of the entire file, with the coversheet, external letters, and references to external letters removed.

For critical reviews as with promotion and tenure decisions, candidates may request a copy of the file after the process is complete. School chairs (or other appropriate persons) should confirm to their deans in writing that they have reviewed the results with any candidates who were “reappointed with counseling” or “reappointed with warning.” This step creates a documentary record that the intended messages are being sent. Best practices suggest that the candidate receive a written summary of the discussion, as often during stressful conversations people may forget and/or fail to comprehend important details.

## Coming up Again

The *Faculty Handbook* is currently silent on the question of whether faculty members who have been denied promotion or tenure may resubmit their materials in a later cycle for another evaluation.

The deans have recommended that an individual have only two chances to be approved for tenure. Individuals without tenure who are in their seventh years of service may be reconsidered only if there is a significant change in their accomplishments since the last review. Faculty members considering this option should seek counsel from their school chairs on this decision. If individuals “come up early” and are denied, they must be evaluated again in the “must” year.

With respect to external letters for promotion or tenure cases that are being reconsidered for the second consecutive year, Faculty Affairs asks that either all the letters from the previous evaluation be used or none; cherry picking reviewers is not acceptable and undermines the case. If letters are being re-used, a few additional ones may be solicited to give a fresh look at the file. The Provost recommends that previous letter writers be given a chance to update based on new material. Every letter of internal evaluation should explicitly identify and address what has changed in the candidate’s situation from the earlier review. The dean’s presentation to the Provost’s Advisory Committee should highlight the changes. For cases that are being considered more than one year after an initial attempt, the “all or none” rule with regard to external reviewers no longer applies. In these cases, the selection of letter writers follows the same procedure as given for the first attempt at tenure and/or promotion, where the school chair/unit head and candidate jointly develop the list of external reviewers, regardless of which reviewers were on the list previously.

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<sup>12</sup> [Faculty Handbook, Section 3.3.8](#): “The appropriate place for the individual Faculty member to receive this feedback is from the Unit Head(s).”

## Tenure on Appointment

The BOR allows tenure to be awarded at the time of hire for established scholars who meet the Institute's standards (BOR Policies 4.4 and 8.3.7; *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.1). Except for appointments to administrative positions, the individual must have held tenure at another institution, although doing so does not guarantee an offer of tenure on hire at Georgia Tech.<sup>13</sup> The process for tenure-on-hire cases is documented in the Provost's memo dated April 19, [2021](#). The memo discusses three categories of cases: appointment as School Chairs or Deans, appointment as Professor for those who have held that rank previously, and other appointments as Professor and all Associate Professor appointments. In all cases, the faculty member needs to have held tenure at their prior institution. More [detailed instructions for the process](#) are included in the [Faculty Affairs website](#). The process considers evidence on all three criteria for tenure —teaching, creativity, and service. The Provost's Advisory Committee will meet monthly to consider these cases.

Faculty hired into associate professor positions who held tenure at a previous institution and are hired at Georgia Tech without tenure may receive up to three years credit toward tenure, and thus be eligible to be considered for tenure in their second year at Tech. These years of credit must be specified in their offer letters. However, as noted earlier, they may be advised by their school chairs to wait before coming up to establish themselves in the Georgia Tech environment.

## List of Templates and Tools Available on the Faculty Affairs Website

[Coversheet](#)

[Initial External Review Request Letter Template](#)

Follow-up [External Review Request Letter Template](#)

[External Reviewer List Template](#)

[CIOS Scores Table](#)

[Waiver of Statement](#)

[Statement of Completeness](#)

## Provost's Memos on Promotion and Tenure Processes

Memos from the Provost set policy and procedure. Those relevant to promotion and tenure are linked below:

[Memo from the Provost on External Peer Review Letters \(.pdf\)](#)

[Memo from the Provost on Promotion and Tenure Packages \(.pdf\)](#)

[Memo from the Provost on Tenure on Hire \(.pdf\)](#)

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<sup>13</sup> Administrators are exempt from this rule, but their tenure must be approved by the Chancellor of the University System.

[Memo from the Provost on Adjustments to Faculty Tenure and Similar Events Due to Covid December 2020 \(.pdf\)](#)

## **Web Resources and Policies**

[Faculty Handbook 4.3, Teaching Evaluation and Support](#)

[Faculty Handbook 3.3.7, Promotion and Tenure Evaluation](#)

[Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

## Table One: Guidance on RPT Letters

### General guidance for all letters:

All letters should be on letterhead and signed. First-level review letters should be signed by all members and other committee letters by the chair of the committee (unless the unit requires all signatures).

Any conflicts of interest by any of the letter writers should be avoided, but where this is not possible, clearly stated in the letter.

External reviewer letters should be assigned a number, and referred to only by a number and not by name, title, or institution.

All content of the external letters and committee deliberations are confidential and should not be shared with the candidate (or anyone else) either during or after the process.

All votes by committee members should be recorded in the letter exactly as listed on the coversheet: Yes, No, Required Abstention, Other Abstention, and Absent.

Letter Writer	Addressed To	Content	Confidentiality	Notes
<b>External Reviewers</b>	School Chair / Unit Head	Provides a candid assessment of the candidate's productivity and creativity and the impact of the faculty's work based on the 3-5 intellectual products provided, and other knowledge they may have regarding teaching, creativity, and service.  Comparison to other people in the field at a similar career stage may be considered. .  Any and all conflicts of interest should be disclosed and explained.  Reviewer should request that the candidate not see the evaluation.	If candidates waive their right to see letters, then all efforts will be made to keep them confidential.	Letters should be on letterhead and include a signature (electronic acceptable).
<b>First-level Review Committee</b>	School Chair/ Unit Head	Range of content varies by unit.  Conflicts of interest should be avoided in establishing the committee. Any that remain should be disclosed and explained.	Will be shared with candidate upon request.	All members of the committee should sign letter.  Letter should be on the committee chair's school letterhead.

<b>School/Unit RPT Committee</b>	School Chair/ Unit Head	<p>Provides a comprehensive examination of the faculty member’s teaching, creativity, and service, and makes a recommendation regarding promotion and/or tenure (or reappointment if critical review).</p> <p>The letter should present both strengths and weaknesses of the case, address the scholarly and/or creative impact, and reflect the discussion and evaluation.</p> <p>Should refer to external reviewers only by an assigned number and give a balanced account, including negative comments in the external reviews.</p> <p>If the vote is split (not unanimous), the letter should indicate the range of views expressed in the committee’s meeting.</p> <p>Records votes of all present including required abstentions and other abstentions and records number of people absent. Includes the actual number of votes for each option, not “unanimous.”</p> <p>Records the date the Committee reviewed and voted. Any conflicts of interest remaining after recusals should be disclosed and explained.</p>	After the process is complete, information will be shared with candidate upon request (after all references to the external review letters have been redacted by Faculty Affairs).	<p>Committee chair should sign letter, unless the unit’s process requires all committee members to sign.</p> <p>Letter should be on school letterhead.</p>
<b>School Chair / Unit Heads</b>	Dean	<p>Provides a comprehensive examination of the faculty member’s teaching, creativity, and service, and makes a recommendation regarding promotion and/or tenure (or reappointment if critical review).</p> <p>The letter should present both strengths and weaknesses of the case from the school chair’s or unit head’s viewpoint, address the scholarly and/or creative impact, and explicitly address any differences with the school or unit committee.</p> <p>The school chair or unit head should assess the quality of instruction and the learning environment set by the faculty member using all available CIOS data (not just</p>	After the process is complete, information will be shared with candidate upon request (after all references to the external review letters have been redacted by Faculty Affairs).	Letter should be on school letterhead and signed.

		<p>“effective teacher” question), peer reviews, and teaching portfolio.</p> <p>The school chair or unit head should include consideration of any negative annual performance reviews or disciplinary actions.</p> <p>The school chair’s or unit head’s letter should explicitly discuss any issues in the selection of external reviewers.</p> <p>Any conflicts of interest remaining after recusals should be disclosed and explained.</p> <p>Includes CR outcome(s), issues addressed during CR, and an explanation of how those issues have been overcome.</p>		
<b>College RPT Committee</b>	Dean	<p>This letter can be short (one to two pages).</p> <p>It provides an independent evaluation of the faculty member’s teaching, creativity, and service, and makes a recommendation regarding promotion and/or tenure (or reappointment if critical review). The letter should explicitly address any differences with the school committee and/or school chair’s or unit head’s letter. There is no need to repeat material from the earlier levels.</p> <p>Should refer to external reviewers only by an assigned number.</p> <p>If the vote is split (not unanimous), the letter should indicate the range of views expressed in the committee’s meeting.</p> <p>Records votes of all present including required abstentions and other abstentions, and records number of people absent.</p> <p>Any conflicts of interest remaining after recusals should be disclosed and explained.</p>	<p>After the process is complete, information will be shared with candidate upon request (after all references to the external review letters have been redacted by Faculty Affairs).</p>	<p>Letter should be on school letterhead of primary author.</p> <p>At a minimum, the chair of the committee should sign letter. Some unit processes require all members to sign.</p>

		Includes the actual number of votes for each option, not "unanimous." Records the date the Committee reviewed and voted.		
<b>Dean</b>	Provost	If all previous internal letters are in agreement, this should be a brief summary (one to two pages).  If deans are not in agreement with the previous recommendations or interpretations of the evidence, they should provide a detailed explanation of their recommendation and/or differences.	After the process is complete, information will be shared with candidate upon request (after all references to the external review letters have been redacted by Faculty Affairs).	Letter should be on college letterhead and signed.

**Table Two: Who Provides/Maintains What in the Institute File**

ITEM	FACULTY MEMBER	SCHOOL or COLLEGE	COMMITTEE	INSTITUTE	EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Coversheet				X	
Bio-sketch	X				
Dean's letter		X			
College committee letter			X		
Chair's letter		X			
School/unit committee letter			X		
First-level review report (Area Committee report)			X		
CIOS score template and other teaching evaluation material	*				
Sample initial & follow-up request letter(s) to reviewers***		X			
External letter selection table***		X			
External reviewer bio-sketches***		X			
External letters, in order by assigned number***					^
Candidate personal narrative	X				
Candidate standard CV, with table of contents and page numbers	X				
CV addendum with unfunded proposals or grants/projects in nondisclosure phase	X				
Any updates to the CV, signed and dated by the candidate	**				
Signed statement of completeness***	**				
Signed waiver statement***	**				
*Some schools or units provide staff to assist candidate with table; some units provide peer evaluation reports.					
^Candidate provides some names to unit head (who makes the final list and solicitation).					
**Unit will provide forms and guidance for the faculty member to sign at the beginning of process and following updates, as appropriate.					
***Generated and maintained via the PROMOTE system.					

## Appendix A: Guidance for Promotion and Tenure with Expanded Scope of Creativity

The [Georgia Tech Faculty Handbook Section 3.3.4](#) gives criteria for promotion and tenure based on the scholarly activities of instruction, creativity, and service. While colleges and schools generally refine the category of “creativity” to be discipline-based research, the Faculty Handbook criteria in Section 3.3.7 on the Evaluation of Creative Contributions is more general.

This document addresses procedural guidance in promotion cases for tenure-track faculty whose creativity contributions are considered, within the context of their school(s), to be non-traditional, non-disciplinary, or highly specialized. Specific examples that may lack established criteria within a college or school include contributions and impact in entrepreneurial areas; industry, government, community or society in general; scholarship of teaching and learning; artistic production and the art; and public scholarship. Such areas contribute to the values and mission of Georgia Tech and are very impactful.

In all tenure and promotion cases, we are seeking excellence and impact in the creativity and scholarship category. This guidance is intended to help faculty build their cases and to enable departments to structure their evaluation processes.

### **Candidates:**

Determine what are the most impactful and creative innovations and build the core of the case around those.

- Discuss the core innovations with the school chair or unit head and possibly people at the college and Institute levels well before the tenure or promotion portfolios are assembled.
- Write the narrative and select at least some samples of work in that category to include among the five creative products submitted with the dossier.
- In the narrative, provide measures of impact. For example, for entrepreneurial activity, funds raised or licenses awarded could be appropriate measures. For innovations in the educational sphere, publications in education journals, adoption of methods, leadership in professional organizations, or awards or invitations can demonstrate the stature of the candidate.
- Demonstrate the impact of the work; stronger cases will have impact beyond the instructional unit and campus; e.g., regional, national or even international impact.
- Suggest some external reviewers who could analyze that work. These need not be from academia, but should be respected leaders in their field).
- Discuss with your unit how the composition of the local review committee members might be altered to provide appropriate expertise needed to evaluate your contributions.

- Consider making appropriate changes to the format of the CV, but make sure these changes are reviewed by senior faculty and school chair. For example, faculty who have significant administrative roles can insert a section IV Summary of Higher Education Administrative and Leadership Experience in their CV (using the description/format that is in the [CV Format for Academic Professionals](#), Section IV)

**Review Committees:**

- Members of disciplinary review or first level committees should include people whose expertise is in that area, even if this means adding members to the local committee from outside of the unit
- The committee should be charged using the language in the Faculty Handbook on review criteria

**External Reviewers:**

- Select people who are appropriate for the topics listed as the main contributions, this might include people from industry, academic administration, government, public administration, non-profit organizations, etc.
- Ask reviewers to judge the innovation and the impact of the work at the regional, national, or international level.

## **Appendix B: Covid-19 Related Guidance**

There are two Provost's memos that outline Covid-related extensions to tenure and critical review timelines, one dated April 17, [2020](#) and one to supplement it, dated December [7, 2020](#). The impact of Covid will continue for some faculty for tenure decisions through the AY2026-2027 year to accommodate faculty members who had difficulties getting their research labs and research groups established due to Covid restrictions. In addition to the Provost's memos, the following internal resources are available:

[FAQ](#)

[Guidance for RPT Candidates and Evaluators](#)