

# Guidance on the Promotion and Tenure Process

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# Guidance on the Promotion and Tenure Process

## Office of Faculty Affairs

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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 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. Faculty Affairs removes from these files all reference to external letters, including selection of letter writers, 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>1</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 may 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) allows individuals to come up for consideration in the second year at Georgia

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<sup>1</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.

Tech, although school chairs may advise candidates to wait longer to establish themselves in the Tech 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 on tenure allow for individuals to be considered for tenure and promotion before their “can” years. School chairs can consider putting forward candidates with exceptional cases when they are ready. The general expectation is that an individual will be considered for tenure only once; a second request should have strong justification (see the section of this document on “coming up again.”) For promotion to full professor, generally six-years or more time-in-rank are expected, per the GT Faculty Handbook; only exceptional cases are considered earlier. Once the time-in-grade requirement has been met, 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 Faculty Affairs before the process starts.

## The Coversheet

The [standard coversheet for promotion and tenure cases](#) is posted on the Faculty Affairs website. All information on the sheet must be confirmed among the unit, college, and Faculty Affairs at the start of the process, typically the spring before the candidate goes up. The coversheet specifies when the probationary period (“tenure clock”) started for untenured faculty and any extensions through approved leaves of absence. Years 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 original signatures of committee chairs, school chairs, deans, and eventually the Provost and President.

## Candidate Materials

Each candidate prepares several documents that form the basis for the file: a biosketch, a personal narrative, a *curriculum vitae*, and a table of normalized Course Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS scores).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Some schools have their staff prepare the tables for the candidates’ file. However, candidates should at least confirm the data.

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- nor underrepresents the candidate's accomplishments. Candidates also sign statements to certify that their documents are complete and waiver forms that state whether or not they forego their rights to see the external letters.

### **Biosketch<sup>3</sup>**

The file should begin with a brief biosketch for the candidate that is designed to introduce the candidate to a general audience. The biosketch 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 biosketch 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 biosketch 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 biosketch 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 and significance. Candidates should point out innovative elements of their scholarship and teaching, and the impact they are having. On teaching, the list of elements that appear in *Faculty Handbook* Section 3.3.7 provides a useful check list for what can be included. Candidates can use the personal narrative to clarify their contributions in collaborative work and describe their advising styles and results. 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.

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 first or third person.

### **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

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<sup>3</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.

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>4</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.

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. In their personal narratives, candidates should describe their teaching philosophies, innovations, and responses to teaching evaluations, along with their advising approaches and accomplishments where appropriate.

The teaching and training assessment section of the file should contain both peer review or other qualitative evaluation of these roles by peers within Georgia Tech and a summary table on CIOS scores. 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 becomes 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 a separate memo in the file, with a specific date and clear information on what is being updated. The candidate should also sign and date this memo. These updates should be significant such as additional awards, grants, or publications.

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<sup>4</sup> Some units require candidates to indicate their percentage contribution for each publication.

## External Review

For promotion and tenure, external letters of evaluation are required.<sup>5</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/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 school chair independently developing lists of possible reviewers. School chairs may consult with others in developing their lists, including 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 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. 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.<sup>6</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, and which by both. The final selections should include a majority of names independently selected by the chair, 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.

A template that units should use to summarize this information is available on the Faculty Affairs website (it is called “[External Reviewer List](#)”). The template should be followed by short biosketches for the reviewers who returned a letter. These biosketches 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 biosketches, and/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).

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<sup>5</sup> See the [Faculty Affairs website](#) for the 2013 guidance memo from the Provost regarding the external review letters.

<sup>6</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.”



## 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"](#)).

## Approaching the Reviewers

The school chair/unit head should request the letters of review using the [standard template letter\(s\)](#) provided on the Faculty Affairs website. As a sign of respect to the reviewer, no one other than the chair should ever sign this letter of request. Neither the chair 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, the Biosketch 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 is picking particularly positive or negative reviewers or unconsciously communicating the chair's expected outcome. It also helps assure that practices are consistent across campus. The initial and follow-up request letter templates are on the Faculty Affairs website. The sample letters should be included in the dossier submitted to Faculty Affairs.

Writers should be asked to focus on the candidate's scholarly/creative contributions; to offer information on professional service if they have it; and comment on teaching only if they have direct experience. They should say explicitly whether, in their judgment, the candidate would be a viable candidate for promotion and tenure at their institutions. These judgments provide some information to help Georgia Tech compare its standards with those of other institutions.

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 we will keep their letters confidential to the greatest extent permitted by law. To complement our legal efforts, the chair's letter asks reviewers to request confidentiality specifically in their letters. All of this language is crucial to 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) also assigns each reviewer a number. When the letter arrives, the unit should label it with a number at the top of the first page: "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.

## 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.

## 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 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 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>7</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 unit head appoints the committee. The procedure used 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.

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<sup>7</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.

All members of the committee are expected to attend its meetings, and everyone present is expected to vote. Any 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 relationship; 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. 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 and/or tenure in that unit with regard to that criterion. Unit and 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)

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/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 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) are noted on the coversheet **and in the committee's letter, along with the date of deliberation.** Where the vote is split, 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.**

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/unit committee. The unit head, however, should be an observer in these meetings and not an active participant, asking only clarifying questions or pointing out deviations from policies, to ensure that the unit faculty make their own

judgment on the case. It is not acceptable practice for chairs 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 unit committee in hand, the school chair/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 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 letter recommends for or against promotion and/or 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 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 letter represents an independent judgment on these matters. To the extent that the criteria are evaluated differently from the approach the unit committee took, the basis for the judgment should be explained in the letter. The letter from the unit head should explicitly address any issues in the selection of the external reviewers.

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 AFTER the committee votes, the discussions and votes from that meeting should be addressed in the school chair's letter.

The chair'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>8</sup> Any committee member with a conflict of interest should be recused prior to the discussion of the case, with the vote recorded as an abstention. At the discretion of

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<sup>8</sup> As described earlier, conflicts can include family relationships; close collaborations; advisor-advisee relationship; business relationships; or marked personal or professional conflicts.

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 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 biosketch, 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**. 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, 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
- Biosketch
- 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 biosketches
- 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 material should be organized as a single searchable PDF file, with each section in the list above bookmarked, as well as the major headings within the CV. When possible, original files should be electronically converted to PDF, rather than printed and rescanned. This pdf must be in the correct format when it is submitted to the Office of Faculty Affairs. Faculty Affairs will return packages that are compiled incorrectly.

### **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 Architecture, Computing, 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 Provost 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 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.

No minutes are taken of the meetings and the Provost's Advisory Committee does not write a letter for the file. However, 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.

## 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.

## 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>9</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.

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<sup>9</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).”

## 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; Faculty Affairs is submitting this recommendation for consideration as a change in the *Faculty Handbook*. On rare occasions, individuals without tenure who are in their seventh years of service may be reconsidered, 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.

On 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. The “all or none” rule with regard to external reviewers also applies for promotion cases that are being reconsidered more than two years after an earlier decision. In these cases, even repeat external reviewers should write new letters.

## 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>10</sup> Associate professors who held tenure at a previous institution but 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.

The process for tenure-on-hire cases departs from the standard in that internal letters are required only from a committee of the faculty and the unit head before the file goes to the Office of Faculty Affairs for the Institute-level review by the Provost’s Advisory Committee. However, the Provost expects that documentation will be the same as for an on-campus candidate and that the school chair or dean will request external letters from people who meet the standard criteria for external letter writers. The process must consider evidence on all three criteria for tenure —teaching, creativity, and service. If the

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<sup>10</sup> Administrators are exempt from this rule, but their tenure must be approved by the Chancellor of the University System.



request is made at a time when the Provost's Advisory Committee is not meeting, then the vote is taken electronically.

## 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](#)

Tenure calculator [under development]

Web Resources and Policies (section added)

[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>           | Unit head               | <p>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.</p> <p>Comparison to other people in the field at a similar career stage and whether this candidate would be successful at the referee's home institution for promotion and/or tenure.</p> <p>Any and all conflicts of interest should be disclosed and explained.</p> <p>Reviewer should request that the candidate not see the evaluation.</p> | 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.   | Will be shared with candidate upon request.  | All members of the committee should sign letter.                                 |

|                                  |                         |   |  |  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|--|
|                                  |                         | Conflicts of interest should be avoided in establishing the committee. Any that remain should be disclosed and explained.   |  | 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, 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. <b>Includes the actual number of votes for each option, not "unanimous."</b></p> <p><b>Records the date the Committee reviewed and voted.</b> 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</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 viewpoint, address the scholarly and/or creative impact, and explicitly address any differences with the school committee.</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>The chair should assess the quality of instruction and the learning environment set by the faculty member using all available CIOS data (not just “effective teacher” question), peer reviews, and teaching portfolio.</p> <p>The chair should include consideration of any negative annual performance reviews or disciplinary actions.</p> <p>The chair’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 chair’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, 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>Includes the actual number of votes for each option, not “unanimous.”</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> |

|             |         |  |   |   |
|-------------|---------|--|---|---|
|             |         | Records the date the Committee reviewed and voted.   |   |   |
| <b>Dean</b> | Provost | <p>If all previous internal letters are in agreement, this should be a brief summary (one to two pages).</p> <p>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.</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 college letterhead and signed.</p> |

**TABLE TWO: WHO PROVIDES WHAT IN THE INSTITUTE FILE**

| ITEM   | FACULTY MEMBER | SCHOOL or COLLEGE | COMMITTEE | INSTITUTE | EXTERNAL REVIEWERS |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| Coversheet   |                |                   |           | X         |                    |
| Biosketch  | 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 biosketches  |                | 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 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. |                |                   |           |           |                    |