

Frequently Asked Questions About RTP

How and when should a candidate prepare for the retention, tenure and promotion review process?

Candidates are advised to consult with department Chairs and faculty mentors about the specific expectations for dossiers in their disciplines. After reviewing the University RTP Policy S98-8 (<http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/s98-8.htm>) and any college or department guidelines, a candidate should become familiar with the general categories of evaluation and set up a system for saving documentation within these categories. Some people have an organized set of files; others place all materials in a single drawer or box. Organizing the materials and seeking additional supporting letters, if needed, usually takes place the summer before the second, fourth and sixth year reviews, with final assembly of the dossier taking place early in the fall semester of those years. Your Chair/Director, your Dean, the Center for Faculty Development and CFA are available to answer questions about dossier preparation. Sample dossiers are available in the Office of Faculty Affairs.

Who is responsible for the contents of the dossier?

The faculty member under review has primary responsibility to provide materials in his or her application for retention, promotion, or tenure. The department Chair is charged to be sure that the dossier is complete. University RTP Policy S98-8, V.2.a. states, "...it is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that the evidence necessary for a full and fair evaluation is contained in the dossier."

What is meant by the closing of the dossier?

On the announced due date (<http://www.sjsu.edu/facultyaffairs/calendar/>) for each group (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors), the dossier should be complete. After the candidate delivers the dossier to the department Chair, it should be reviewed by the department Chair and the departmental committee, for completeness and format only. The department committee and the Chair should not begin their evaluation of the candidate's performance until after the closing date. However, in the period between the due date and the closing date, the committee may indicate through the department Chair or the committee Chair that additional materials must be included or make suggestions as to how the dossier can be more clearly organized and explained.

Who can add materials to the dossier before the due date?

The candidate prepares the initial dossier. However, candidates will often work closely with the department Chair and staff to be sure that materials from previous reviews, materials from departmental files, etc. are included. For any materials that are added by another faculty member or administrator, the candidate must receive a copy and has 10 days to respond in writing.

Who can add materials to the dossier between the due date and the closing date?

It is in this period that the department Chair, faculty, students, and administrators may add materials to the dossier. For example, a letter of commendation may have been sent to the Chair about the faculty member. Perhaps the candidate has included his or her own copy of that letter, or perhaps the Chair will add it. It is possible that a member of the RTP committee, after skimming the contents of the dossier will suggest that an evaluation of committee work be added and such a letter may be solicited and added at this time. The candidate's response or rebuttal received within the ten-day limit must accompany the dossier. Once the dossier closes, late arriving material must not be added and committee members can seek no other material.

Who can add materials to the dossier after it closes?

The only way to add material to the dossier once it closes (other than the required review materials from each level and any rebuttal) is via the formal late-add period. The late-add process is designed to allow faculty members (fourth year candidates and candidates for promotion only, candidates for tenure and promotion combined, and candidates undergoing special third or fifth year reviews) to petition a university level committee, to add to the dossier materials that are crucial to the decision and that were not available at the time of submission. If the committee approves the addition of the materials, the dossier must be returned to the first level of review, each level of review must be repeated, and a new vote recorded based on the submitted and approved late-add materials. See S98-8, III.A.5. (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s98-8.htm>).

What is the index of the dossier? How is it made and how is it changed if new materials are added?

The index is a very important part of the dossier, because it is added to the permanent Personnel Action File at the end of each performance review cycle. The CFA-CSU Agreement, Article 11.7

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(http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CFA_CONTRACT/article11.shtml) states that the Working Personnel Action File (dossier) is included by reference in the permanent Personnel Action File. This means that anything referenced in the index of the dossier, and only those items, may be used in future personnel actions and decisions even though they are not physically housed in the Office of Faculty Affairs. It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure that the index is complete. If changes are made during the period prior to closing of the dossier, the index should be revised. There is no need to index rebuttals, review materials, or late-add materials, as these all go into the permanent file. It is highly recommended that the dossier index be maintained electronically, so that last minute changes can be reflected.

Can the dossier be taken to a faculty office or off campus?

No. Once the dossier is turned in, it is to be kept in a secure location throughout the entire process. Reviewers may only read the dossier in the area and under the conditions specified by the department Chair, Dean or AVP for Faculty Affairs.

How do we interpret the expectation of confidentiality in the RTP process?

We interpret it strictly. No participant in the RTP review process should discuss the deliberations with anyone outside the committee. Candidates will learn of the recommendations at each level and will have an opportunity to respond in writing. Candidates should not ask committee members to tell them results of votes or to talk about any reasons that were not reduced to writing. When the review cycle is complete, candidates may seek guidance from their Chair or Dean in how to improve future submissions. Breaches of confidentiality in the RTP process could result in a formal reprimand from an administrator or in an unprofessional conduct charge by a colleague.

If a candidate believes a procedural irregularity has occurred, what should be done?

Immediately discuss the concerns with the department Chair, Dean, AVP for Faculty Affairs, or CFA representative. If there have been procedural errors, especially if they were inadvertent, an agreement can usually be worked out to protect the integrity of the review process, for example, by repeating one step of the process or by inserting an explanatory letter in the dossier addressing an apparent irregularity.

What if an emergency makes it impossible for a candidate or a committee to meet the published deadlines?

The candidate and/or the Chair should immediately make a written request for an extension from the AVP for Faculty Affairs via their Chair and Dean, stating the reasons for the request and the proposed change in timelines. If a modification to the calendar is approved, a written record of the revised deadlines will be placed in the dossier. Extensions are typically approved only in cases of genuine emergency and for brief periods of time. The goal is to have like cases reviewed together at each level.

What if a higher level committee discovers that required material is missing from the dossier?

The committee (or administrator) should immediately notify Faculty Affairs and work out a revised schedule by which each level of review can be repeated with a dossier that includes the required material.

When is a faculty member reviewed if he or she is hired with one or two years of service credit?

Candidates who receive one year of probationary credit undergo "mini-reviews" in the spring semesters of their first and second years on campus. (It would not be meaningful to begin a full second year review within a month of beginning his/her assignment.) The first full multi-level review, a fourth year review, occurs in the third year on campus. Candidates who receive two years of probationary credit undergo a mini-review the spring of their first year, equivalent to the third year review, and a full fourth year review during their second year on campus.

When is a faculty member reviewed if she or he is hired in the spring semester?

According to the CFA-CSU Agreement, Article 13.6 (http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CFA_CONTRACT/article13.shtml), for the purposes of calculating the probationary period, a year of service begins with the first fall term of appointment. Therefore, probationary faculty hired in the spring semester typically have a six and one half-year probationary period.

What materials can a candidate for promotion include in the dossier?

According to III.B of University Policy S98-8 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s98-8.htm>) "For promotion candidates, the period of review shall begin on the effective date of their last promotion or, if there has been

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no prior promotion, on the date of their initial appointment to tenure-track service and continue to the time of the review. The dossier shall contain material which documents achievements during the period of review which includes the years for which any service credit was granted. The dossier shall not include documentation of achievements outside the review period except on a comprehensive vita.”

What should a candidate do if he or she is satisfied with the recommendation of a committee or administrator, but believes that there is a distortion or misstatement in the recommendation?

It is always one’s right to include a response to a recommendation. The word rebuttal should not imply that there is conflict or controversy. Often responses are brief and cordial in tone, simply clarifying a candidate’s record.

If a candidate who is being reviewed for promotion only receives a “not recommend” at the Department level, does the dossier still go forward?

Yes. Current policy allows for each dossier to go through the entire process. Of course, a candidate may choose to withdraw an application for promotion at any point (unlike reviews that are required for retention and tenure). However, this decision rests completely with the individual.

How is evaluation handled when the department’s expectations for a candidate change during the period of review?

It is important that expectations, beyond the basic expectations for faculty members in a discipline, should be spelled out through letters of appointment, Chair’s description and analysis, and department and college guidelines. These should be kept up-to-date. There is no set timeline for when revisions apply to a certain faculty member, but reasonableness should be the guideline. Faculty members should have the chance to meet the expectations that are set. A person cannot be held accountable to a new guideline established in the fifth year that extensive community service is expected of each faculty member. Neither, however, is it reasonable to say that there can be no changes in expectations during an entire probationary period.

Whose responsibility is it to arrange for peer evaluations of teaching?

It is the department Chair’s responsibility to arrange peer evaluations for the candidate. The Chair should consult with the faculty member about the timing, the selection of classes to be reviewed, and the reviewers. Peer evaluations should be conducted on a regular basis throughout the probationary period. University Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness Policy S91-9, F. states, “Peer evaluators should be assigned by the department chair and/or department personnel committee.”; S91-9, F.1. states, “For probationary candidates seeking tenure, classroom visits shall be made in at least one course per semester.”; and S91-9, F2. states, “For candidates seeking promotion, classroom visits shall be made in at least one course per year.”

Who are the members of the peer review committee?

Probationary and tenured faculty elect tenured full-time faculty to peer review committees. When there are insufficient eligible members to serve, the department shall elect members from a related academic discipline(s). At the request of the department, the President may agree to include faculty participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program on department-level committees. However, the majority of the department RTP committee members must be tenured faculty members not in the FERP program. See Agreement 15.38 (http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CFA_CONTRACT/article15.shtml).

How many classes are required to be evaluated by students?

Each faculty member is required to have a minimum of 2 classes annually evaluated with SOTES (Student Opinion of Teaching Effectiveness.) The department may vote to require that all courses must be evaluated with SOTEs. See CFA-CSU Agreement, Article 15.15 (http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CFA_CONTRACT/article15.shtml) and University Policies S91-9 E.b. (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s91-9.htm>) and S08-1 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S08-1.htm>). Although a minimum number of SOTEs is required by policy, be sure that you have evaluated courses that represent your full teaching assignment.

Is there any way to extend the six-year probationary period?

According to the CFA-CSU Agreement, Article 13.7 (http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CFA_CONTRACT/article13.shtml), the President, upon written request submitted to the AVP Faculty Affairs via the Chair and Dean, may extend a faculty unit employee’s probationary period for an additional year if the tenure-track faculty member is on leave without pay or is taking a one-year leave of absence for pregnancy/birth or adoption.

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When should outside reviews be sought, and who requests them?

Particular elements of the dossier that are peer reviewed and accepted do not require additional outside evaluation. Works in progress and unpublished work, however, should be assessed whenever possible. This is particularly important with respect to work that is in a specialized area of expertise that is outside the scope of the department. Additionally, external evaluations of professional contributions may be important if the significance of the service is not obvious. Such letters must be written by professionals in a position to assess the quality and significance of the contributions. See S98-8 section II.B.2. (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s98-8.htm>). If outside reviews are needed, the candidate must work with his/her department Chair, mentors and Dean during dossier preparation to determine what items may need outside review. Bearing the above considerations in mind, the candidate and Dean must request written evaluation of such work in time to add the evaluations to the dossier before closing.

How and when can the candidate get the dossier back after the RTP cycle?

After the President's decisions are announced, there is still considerable wrap-up work in the Office of Faculty Affairs to obtain signatures from the University Chair, the President or the Provost on each RTP form; the appropriate copies of all signed forms must be completed for inclusion in the faculty member's Personnel Action File (PAF). When this process is complete, usually mid-summer, we will call the Dean's office to schedule return of the dossiers. We require a signature for each dossier that is released to the Dean's representative (College Confidential or College RTP Coordinator, only.)

This draft list of questions and responses is still in progress. We appreciate your feedback. Which of these responses need clarification? What additional questions do you want to see addressed on our website? Please send your suggestions to Susan Supan at susan.supan@sjsu.edu.
