

# **TRANSITIONAL POLICY FOR 2025-2026**

## **Structure of Promotion and Tenure Committees IST\_AC-19 Administrative Guideline**

This administrative guideline describes the construction of the first-level ‘departmental’ committee and second-level college committee for promotion and tenure (P&T) evaluations in the College of IST. In this guideline, the word **‘department’ is used in the peer review committee descriptions. Faculty Areas are the interim aggregations** of IST faculty used for committee formation before departments are formed in the college. There are three areas/departments in IST that are the basis of committee formation.

The college will revisit the guideline and may decide to change this transition guideline to generate individual departmental committees in the future, once sufficient numbers in associate and full professors have tenure homes in each IST department. While the college faculty is growing, however, IST does not have enough eligible professors at these ranks to complete three separate departmental peer committees, complete the college peer committee, and hold elections that offer a choice of candidates for membership.

Within this transitional guideline, there is a **total of two committees** whose members evaluate dossiers for tenure and promotion of tenure-track and tenured professors in IST.

### **A. Criteria Common to Formation of Both Committees**

Committee membership is established in spring of the academic year before the committee evaluates candidates (for example, spring 2025 elections would take place for a committee that reviews candidates in the 2025-2026 academic year).

The electorate in each department consists of all faculty members who are tenure track or tenured with a majority appointment in the college and affiliation (tenure home) with the department. Academic Administrators with appointment/affiliation in a department do not vote in committee member elections.

Member elections take place before the dean or dean’s designee appoints additional committee members. These appointments are made in consultation with department heads.

A chair is elected by a committee’s members once they are all in place and before the start of the review cycle.

A faculty member on leave (paid or unpaid) does not serve on a peer committee (for example,

professors on sabbatical).

A faculty member who is an Academic Administrator may not serve on a peer committee (for example, associate dean or head of department).

In the event of a tie in the vote during department-based elections for a committee member, the head will select the committee member from among the tied candidates.

All committee members with rank equal to or above the promotion rank sought will serve on the committee when it evaluates a candidate. A committee member recuses themselves from evaluation if they have a conflict of interest for a candidate, such as a spousal relationship.

A committee must consist of at least three members.

## **B. Second-Level Promotion and Tenure Committee – College Committee**

The pool for membership in the college committee for tenure and promotion consists of all tenured faculty members with a majority appointment in the college. The committee is comprised of **five** tenured faculty members.

**Three** committee members are elected. Each department shall elect one member to the college peer committee.

All eligible associate and full-rank professors will be on the departmental ballots. Professors who are **not** eligible include faculty who will be on leave, academic administrators, professors submitting a dossier for promotion in the upcoming year, and professors who are continuing their service on the first-level peer review committee. Elected members serve two-year terms.

If an elected member cannot complete the second year of their service, a replacement for that one year will be determined by election within the department they represent. The vote may be for two years of service to accomplish a staggered set of terms among elected members at the discretion of the dean or dean's designee.

The dean appoints **two** members to the college committee. The purpose of these appointments is to attain a set of three full-rank professors and/or to balance the range in disciplinary foci of members. The appointed members serve one-year terms. Members can serve multiple terms.

The second-level college committee does **not** review second- and fourth-year tenure dossiers (or third- or fifth-year dossiers if they are prepared). The college committee sees all letters from those previous evaluations (see D.3 below).

## **C. First-level Promotion and Tenure Committee – Departmental Committee**

One committee of **seven** members serves as the departmental committee for all faculty in IST. Until our faculty numbers at required ranks increase and/or the guideline has changed, there are not separate committees for each department.

The pool for membership in the departmental committee consists of all eligible tenured faculty members in IST, excluding members of the college committee for the upcoming academic year (the year when the committee's reviews are conducted).

**Six** committee members are elected. Each department shall elect two members to the departmental committee.

Elections to the departmental committee take place after the formation of the college P&T committee and before the member appointment by the dean.

All eligible associate and full-rank professors will be on the departmental ballots. Professors

who are **not** eligible include members of the college committee, faculty on leave in the coming year, academic administrators, professors submitting a dossier for promotion in the upcoming year, and professors who are continuing their service on the departmental committee. Elected members serve two-year terms.

If an elected member cannot complete the second year of their service, a replacement for that one year will be determined by election within the department they represent. The vote may be for two years of service to accomplish a staggered set of terms among elected members at the discretion of the head.

The Dean appoints **one** member to the department peer committee. The purpose of the appointment is to attain a set of three full-rank professors and/or to balance the range in disciplinary foci of members. The appointed member serves a one-year term. Members can serve multiple terms.

In cases of an insufficient number of professors to have a minimum membership of three professors at the required rank(s), tenured professors from other Penn State colleges may be asked by the IST dean or dean's designee to serve. This exception may occur for promotions to full professor.

The departmental committee evaluates the entire dossier of a candidate, including external letters of assessment for tenure and promotion candidates. This committee also reviews second- and fourth-year dossiers. The committee may be asked to review third- and fifth-year dossiers if required of a candidate.

## **D. Additional Information on Process**

### *D.1. Evaluation of student assessment of teaching*

A one-page report that evaluates student assessments of a candidate's teaching is prepared by a pair of professors. The report is 750 words or less and evaluates both quantitative median and mode ratings and qualitative open-ended comments by student respondents to SEEQ/SRTE surveys. All SEEQ/SRTE reports for all courses taught during the period of evaluation are provided to the pair of professors.

For this pair, one professor is a member of the departmental committee. The second professor is selected by the head of the department from a list of two or more professors that is provided by the candidate. The candidate's suggestions may include teaching professors and tenured or tenure-track professors at the same or lower ranks than the candidate, in addition to professors at higher ranks. The second professor does **not** become a member of the departmental committee (unless they are already a member of it). Their specific role is preparing the SEEQ/SRTE report that is entered in the dossier.

Committees with multiple dossiers to evaluate will most likely be reading reports by multiple pairs of professors.

(See document from the university's Office of Faculty Affairs that is appended.)

### *D.2. Steps for external letters of assessment*

External letters of assessment are part of a candidate's dossier prepared for tenure and promotion to associate professor or a dossier for promotion from associate to full professor.

The departmental committee members generate a list of people external to Penn State who are suitable for writing assessment letters (for example, the proposed writers are not past supervisors, publication coauthors, or research collaborators). The candidate also submits a list

of suggested external evaluators. The head of department narrows the lists (and plans additional names) to produce a final recommendation of up to 15 external evaluators. This final list includes each potential evaluator's name, rank and titles, affiliation(s), contact information, and a short biography (less than 100 words).

The dean or dean's designee approves the final list of external evaluators. The head asks potential writers if they are willing to assess candidate materials. The dean's office makes formal requests for letters, provides evaluation materials, and produces the log of external evaluators for the dossier.

Letters are requested in the spring of the year before a dossier is prepared and finalized. Thus, it is the members of the preceding year's committee that make the recommendations for letters that the next year's committee will be reading.

#### *D.3. Peer committee letters from previous evaluations*

First- and second-level committee letters written for the stages toward a tenure decision are included in subsequent dossiers. For example, after the new guidelines are in place for six years, a tenure dossier will often include four peer letters: second-, fourth-, and sixth-year letters by the departmental committee and one sixth-year letter by the college committee. This continuity is important for evaluating candidate responses to early constructive guidance and clarity of expectations.

A transitional tenure dossier will include all the letters written by the earlier committees, such as area committee letters from second- and fourth-year area review committees; one sixth-year letter by the first-level peer committee; and second-, fourth-, and sixth-year letters by college peer committees.

#### *D.4 Committee appointments in extenuating circumstances*

The dean or dean's designee will appoint a replacement member if an appointed or elected member departs the university abruptly or takes an unexpected leave during the academic year in which the evaluations are occurring (they become unavailable with insufficient notice to run a departmental election). Alternatively, the dean or dean's designee may approve dossier evaluation by a committee with fewer than five but at least three members.

If there are associate professor candidates being evaluated for promotion to the full rank of professor during the upcoming academic year and fewer than three full-rank professors are on committee, the dean or dean's designee will appoint additional member(s) to create a three-member full-rank peer committee. For example, a third full-rank professor supplemental to an existing five-member committee does **not** serve for tenure evaluations (promotion from assistant to associate rank).

Other peer additions that customize committee membership for individual candidates are **not** permitted. One set of committee members evaluates tenure dossiers of all assistant professor candidates in a given year. Likewise, one set of committee members evaluates dossiers for all associate professor candidates seeking promotion in a given year.

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Revised - 4/8/2025 - Revised to include departmental P&T committee

*Text of document sent to IST Dean's Office from University Office of Faculty Affairs in Fall 2024 in response to Faculty Senate decisions.*

*See section D.1 above for summary in Transitional Year IST\_AC-19 Guideline*

## **Changes to the Assessment of Teaching**

Beginning July 1, 2025, all colleges are expected to incorporate the overarching principles for the incorporation of student feedback detailed below into promotion and/or tenure guidelines for tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty members undergoing formal review. These changes must be reflected in the guidelines for academic units within the college no later than July 1, 2026.

- The goal of this approach is to provide a holistic review of SEEQ/SRTE student feedback that minimizes bias.
- This review of student feedback will replace the current summary of quantitative and qualitative student feedback on teaching effectiveness in formal promotion and/or tenure review materials.
- The unit at the first level of review will identify a minimum of two individuals to serve as student feedback reviewers, consistent with the criteria below.
  - o At least one individual selected from a list of two or more Penn State faculty members nominated by the candidate
  - o One member of the promotion and tenure committee at the first level of review
- The reviewers are charged with
  - o Examining student feedback from available courses for the period since a candidate's last formal review and/or covered by the review (whichever is the shortest)
  - o Writing a report of no more than 750 words (about one single-spaced page) describing insights about the candidate's teaching effectiveness derived from quantitative and qualitative student feedback from SEEQ/SRTE responses across the courses taught during the review period
  - o As applicable, reviewers should incorporate attention to the elements of teaching: effective course design, effective instruction, inclusive and ethical pedagogy, reflective and evolving practice
    - NOTE: Reviewers are advised to consult with the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Effectiveness for guidance for how to interpret student feedback
- This report will be sent to the administrator at the first level of review and will be included in the dossier or promotion materials reviewed by the candidate. If a candidate perceives that the report inadequately represents teaching effectiveness based on student feedback, candidates may revise their narratives to address the perceived discrepancy.
- SEEQ/SRTE scores will be included in an appendix to the dossier. The delivery mode of the course and the distribution, mode, and median for SEEQ/SRTE items will be provided for each course.
- All candidates have the option of including raw data student feedback from the SEEQ/SRTE in their supplemental materials.
- As long as the principles articulated here are adhered to, academic units are free to incorporate this work into existing structures, such as teaching review committees.