University Procedures for Mid-Probationary Review

2014-15

(Note: Deadlines are set by each dean)

Purpose: The primary purpose of the mid-probationary review is to provide developmental advice to best support the candidate during the probationary period. The following procedures clarify the process of careful consideration by the department and review by the dean and Provost to ensure fairness and consistency across the School and University. The procedures do not change the developmental intent of the mid-probationary review as described in Section 3.3.1 of the Faculty Handbook and do not reflect any change in the standards for tenure and promotion as defined in Section 3.4 of the Faculty Handbook. In fact, the mid-probationary review, as stated above, examines the professional trajectory of the candidate rather than directly measuring how close one might be to meeting the standards. These procedures clarify and bring consistency to the review process.

Overview: According to Section 3.3.1 of the Faculty Handbook,

A probationary faculty member shall receive an especially thorough evaluation by the tenured faculty of his or her department after completing approximately half of the probationary period, at a time to be determined by the department chair in consultation with the dean. The written evaluation shall include an assessment of the faculty member’s performance and development in each of the three categories of review.

The mid-probationary review is intended to be developmental and should ordinarily culminate in an advisory letter expressing the views of the tenured faculty as to what the candidate might do in the remainder of the probationary period to enhance his or her candidacy for tenure. However, in those instances where it is evident that a candidate’s prospects for meeting tenure expectations are remote, the mid-probationary review may culminate in a recommendation of non-retention addressed to the dean. A favorable mid-probationary review does not bind the University to grant tenure.

Procedures: Mid-probationary reviews are typically conducted during the spring quarter of the third year. If the probationary period is more or less than the standard seven years (Section 3.4.1), then the candidate should discuss with the dean and chair whether there is any change in the mid-probationary review timing. The Faculty Development Program has resources available in an online repository that may be helpful in preparing materials (http://www.scu.edu/provost/facultydevelopment/index.cfm). Procedures for the mid-probationary review are described below.

---

1 Process: A preliminary draft was reviewed by the Faculty Affairs Committee in Fall 2012. Based on that initial feedback, as well as comments and suggestions from the Council of Deans, Department Chairs, the Faculty Senate Council, the procedures were revised by the Provost’s Office and reviewed by the Faculty Affairs Committee. Additional comments were obtained when a draft was disseminated to the faculty for comment and a town hall meeting was held on January 31, 2013. After a discussion and review of the comments expressed at Faculty Senate Council on February 13, the Faculty Affairs Committee recommended the MPR procedures to the Provost on Feb. 14, 2013 for his approval. Frequently Asked Questions were also prepared and appear in Appendix I. Further refinements were introduced at a Feb. 27 town hall meeting.
For the Candidate

The candidate should carefully review the *Standards for Tenure and Promotion* in Section 3.4.2 of the Faculty Handbook as well as any appropriate College, School or departmental documents.

The candidate shall provide appropriate materials to the department chair by the end of the first week of the quarter during which the MPR is scheduled. The materials should include supporting documentation from the probationary period that will provide evidence of the candidate’s developing a strong record of superior teaching and scholarly or artistic work and service that shows promise for the candidate meeting tenure expectations at the conclusion of the probationary period. The materials should include:

- personal statement,
- annotated CV,
- a listing of courses taught by year for probationary period including enrollments,
- course syllabi,
- copies of student evaluations,
- copies of scholarly or artistic work including grant proposals,
- descriptions of work in progress
- plans for future scholarly work,
- service contributions,
- annual evaluation letters, and
- faculty activity reports.

Other supporting materials might include peer evaluation letters including reports on the direct observation of teaching, documentation of advising and mentoring, a summary of student research, instructional development activity, other contributions to the learning environment, and any awards or honors. Letters from external reviewers obtained by the candidate are not normally part of the file unless approved in advance by the dean. The dean may specify additional materials to be provided by the candidate in College- or School-specific protocols.

Materials entering the process after it has begun shall be transmitted directly to the candidate's dean or, if the evaluations have proceeded beyond the dean, to the Provost. Such late materials need not be reviewed by the authors of completed evaluations unless, in the opinion of the dean or the Provost, they ought to be.

If the outcome of the review is positive, the candidate will receive 1) a letter from the Provost congratulating the candidate on a successful MPR, and 2) an advisory letter from the department expressing the views of the tenured faculty members as to what the candidate might do in the remainder of the probationary period to enhance his or her candidacy for tenure (Section 3.3.1).

If it is evident that a candidate’s prospects for meeting tenure expectations are remote, the Provost shall notify the candidate in writing, and the candidate shall receive a final one-year appointment for the next academic year following Section 3.5.3.1 of the Faculty Handbook. The candidate may request a meeting with the dean to receive the fullest and frankest statement of reasons that is consistent with the confidentiality of the specific recommendations and votes of those who have participated in the evaluation process.
**For the department, dean and Provost**

The department chair must keep all mid-probationary review materials in a secure location.

All tenured faculty members in the candidate’s department are eligible and expected to participate in the review. Each tenured faculty member is expected to read the candidate’s materials, participate in an evaluation meeting at the invitation of the department chair, and contribute to an advisory letter as appropriate. Faculty members on sabbatical or other leave may choose not to participate in the review process. A faculty member who chooses not to participate shall not be involved in any part of the process.

Before reviewing the candidate’s materials, all faculty members participating in the review should carefully review *Standards for Tenure and Promotion* in Section 3.4.2 of the Faculty Handbook as well as any appropriate College, School, or departmental documents.

To ensure a rigorous and thorough review of the candidate’s materials, the chair, in consultation with the dean, shall appoint a committee from the tenured faculty members of the department. The committee will, in consultation with the tenured faculty, prepare a draft of a written evaluation of the candidate’s materials for the department to discuss as part of the review meeting. The chair may serve as a member of the committee and may, in consultation with the dean, appoint appropriate faculty members from outside the department to assist in drafting the evaluation.

The chair shall schedule a review meeting of the tenured faculty to discuss the candidate’s record and what the candidate might do in the remainder of the probationary period to enhance his or her case for tenure. The chair will distribute a draft of the written evaluation to all of the participating faculty members before the meeting. Since the intent of the mid-probationary review is developmental, a retention vote is normally not needed to formulate the departmental recommendation. However, in those instances where it is evident that a candidate’s prospects for meeting tenure expectations are remote, any faculty member in the meeting can call for a vote at the conclusion of the meeting. If the motion for a vote is seconded, the faculty should engage in further discussion before a ballot is distributed with two options: “recommend,” or “do not recommend” retention. A faculty member must be at the meeting to vote.

After the review meeting, the committee should revise the draft written evaluation to reflect the faculty discussion and the recommendations of the department. If a retention vote is conducted, the unattributed results are reported in the written evaluation. The committee members drafting the evaluation must review and sign the final evaluation document. The department chair will prepare a cover page with signature lines for all participating faculty. The final written evaluation and ballot results, if applicable, are confidential and not shared with the candidate; however, aspects of the written evaluation may be used in an advisory letter to provide context as appropriate.

The chair will submit to the dean the following documents: 1) a cover sheet that contains the signatures of the participating faculty to record those who participated in the review, 2) the final

---

1 The committee may be composed of the participating, tenured faculty members in a department; particularly in small departments.
written evaluation signed by the chair and the committee members, and 3) the materials submitted by the candidate.

The dean will review the materials provided by the department and discuss the materials with the department chair, and other faculty participants as determined by the dean, before the dean submits a written recommendation to the Provost.

The Provost shall review the department evaluation report and the recommendation made by the dean. If the department had conducted a retention vote during the review meeting, the Provost shall meet with the department chair and dean to discuss the evaluation report and the resulting recommendations. The Provost will render the final decision regarding retention and shall notify the candidate of the decision in writing.

If the chair is notified that a positive decision has been made, the tenured departmental faculty serving on the evaluation committee along with the department chair shall prepare a draft departmental advisory letter. The departmental advisory letter should include an assessment of the faculty member’s performance and development in each of the three categories of review (teaching, scholarship and service) as well as the views of the tenured faculty as to what the candidate might do in the remainder of the probationary period to enhance his or her candidacy for tenure (Section 3.3.1). The dean shall review the draft advisory letter and may also provide comments as needed. The final departmental advisory letter is reviewed and signed by all departmental faculty members participating in the mid-probationary review meeting. Only the advisory letter is given to the candidate.

If a candidate’s prospects for meeting tenure expectations are remote and a decision of non-retention has been made, the Provost shall notify the candidate in writing. An advisory letter is not prepared in this case. The candidate may request a meeting with the dean to receive the fullest and frankest statement of reasons that is consistent with the confidentiality of the specific recommendations and votes of those who have participated in the evaluation process.
Appendix I

Mid-Probationary Review Procedures - Frequently Asked Questions

1. With these new procedures, has the intent of the MPR changed?

_The mid-probationary review is intended to be developmental and should ordinarily culminate in an advisory letter. The University procedures do not change the intent of the process but rather provide clarity regarding procedures._

2. Is a change in the Faculty Handbook required to implement the new University procedures?

_The MPR procedures are consistent with the current Faculty Handbook and define a clear and uniform process across the University._

3. Why are University procedures for the MPR needed?

_Currently, only one school has a written protocol for the review process that is on-line and easily accessible. A second school has a written procedure that is not widely disseminated and does not call for the participation of the entire tenured faculty in the department. Three other schools have no defined process._

_Written procedures that are easily available and widely disseminated will provide clarity and guidance for the probationary faculty member undergoing review and for the tenured faculty conducting the review. The following document has been drafted to provide a uniform procedure consistent with the policy describing mid-probationary review in Section 3.3.1 of the Faculty Handbook._

4. What are the criteria for the review? What does the Handbook mean when it refers to “those instances where it is evident that a candidate’s prospects for meeting tenure expectations are remote”?

_When conducting an MPR, the trajectory of the candidate is carefully reviewed. The trajectory should be consistent with meeting, by the end of the probationary period, the standards for tenure and promotion in the Faculty Handbook. Occasionally, it is clear that a faculty member is not proceeding on a trajectory that will lead to tenure. In those cases, a recommendation may be made not to retain the faculty member. The procedures clarify the process of careful consideration by the department and review by the dean and Provost to ensure fairness and consistency across the school and University. As noted above, the procedures do not change the Handbook. Instead, they clarify and bring consistency to the process._

5. There is a sense that with these new procedures the “bar” has been raised and the expectations are now much higher for probationary faculty?

_The intent and expectations for a mid-probationary review have not changed. The purpose of the procedures is to clarify the process and ensure fairness across the University._
6. Is there a reconsideration or appeal process for a negative retention decision?

Any faculty member can ask for a review by the Faculty Judicial Board in cases where academic freedom or discrimination is a concern (Faculty Handbook, Section 3.4.8). In other cases, no reconsideration or appeal process is currently defined in the Handbook.

7. Can tenured faculty from other departments participate in the MPR?

The MPR procedures allow for the evaluation committee to include SCU faculty from outside the department with approval of the dean.

8. Can external reviewers participate in the MPR?

Letters from external reviewers are not allowed as part of the file unless approved in advance by the dean.

9. Why is the final retention decision made by the Provost?

The department provides a retention recommendation to the dean as part of the mid-probationary review process (Section 3.3.1 of the Faculty Handbook). The actual process of decision-making is not specified. In practice, the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Education and Counseling Psychology protocols state that the department makes a recommendation to the dean, the dean makes a recommendation to the Provost and the Provost makes the decision. In other procedures, the decision-making steps are not clear. Given the potential gravity of the decision, a clear, fair and uniform decision-making process is essential.

In addition, the dean can provide a College or School view of the case and the Provost can add a University-wide perspective. Careful review and thoughtful perspectives from three levels within the University will ensure fairness and consistency across the University.

Lastly, the Provost annually appoints all tenured and tenure-track faculty (Section 3.2.3). The Provost has primary responsibility for the dismissal of a faculty member (Section 3.9). The procedures are consistent with the responsibilities currently assigned to the Provost.

10. Why is the written evaluation not shared with the candidate?

The written evaluation should be thorough and candid. When the mid-probationary review is positive, then the department may incorporate considerable portions of the evaluation in the advisory letter as it works to articulate “what the candidate might do in the remainder of the probationary period to enhance his or her candidacy for tenure.”

11. Why is there a committee appointed to draft the written evaluation?

The members of the committee will ensure a thorough and careful review of all of the materials provided by the candidate. A department chair may decide that all of the tenured faculty will read and carefully review all of the materials provided by the candidate. In such cases, the tenured faculty may form the committee. These procedures allow for flexibility in such decisions.