

UNIVERSITY REVIEW COMMITTEE REVIEWS FOR RETENTION AND TENURE
Bucknell University

Revision history:

Accepted by the Faculty, 3/3/87

Revised 4/98 to incorporate accepted recommendations of the Task Force on Retention, Tenure and Promotion

Revised 4/04 to incorporate accepted recommendations of the University Review Committee

Revised 3/11 to incorporate accepted recommendations of the Committee for the Review of the Evaluation of Teaching, to update timeline and procedure practices, and make other procedural improvements.

The members of the University Review Committee (URC) offer this description of the faculty review process to assist untenured faculty members and departments, schools, or programs preparing for reviews. The statement reflects the Committee's expectations on how best to accomplish its task as prescribed in the Faculty Handbook. We have attempted to make this description as complete and informative as a general statement can be, and have devised several ways for concerned faculty members to obtain more particular information. We refer candidates to "Information for Candidates for Retention and Tenure" (Spring 1998) for additional information.

Early in the academic year, the Provost and the college deans include discussion of the evaluation process in their orientation of new faculty. On or before May 15 of each year, the URC and deans schedule a meeting with the upcoming year's group of candidates for retention and tenure and their department/school/ program chair/directors. The meeting serves to clarify and amplify points contained herein; it also provides an opportunity for candidates to ask questions and to talk informally with each other and the members of the URC. Faculty members who have further questions regarding the review process are urged to contact their chairperson, the appropriate college dean or the chairperson of the URC.

The following pages refer to the typical case of a faculty member whose employment at Bucknell begins in the September following completion or near-completion of the Ph.D. Faculty who come to Bucknell under other circumstances are reviewed according to the same procedures but the schedule of reviews is a matter normally negotiated at the time of appointment, or soon thereafter, in accordance with the provisions of the Faculty Handbook. Other exceptions to the usual schedule are sometimes arranged through the college deans, in consultation with the URC.

I. DRC Structure and Criteria

Department, School, or Program Review Committees (henceforth, 'DRCs') consist of at least four tenured members of the full-time instructional faculty. Departments, schools or programs that lack a sufficient number of tenured members shall consult with the appropriate dean to constitute a DRC from tenured faculty within the relevant academic division. Untenured members of the faculty are not eligible to participate in or observe the deliberations of a DRC.

Departmental/school/program expectations in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service shall be clearly stated in the DRC statements of procedures and criteria, which shall also specify the expected content, length and format of the candidate's self-evaluation statement, as well as the supportive materials to be provided. DRC statements must include a schedule for any intermediate/internal dates for reviews including all submittal dates and differences between requirements/dates for different reviews (2, 4, and 6 year and promotion reviews). DRC review documents shall clearly indicate the criteria and procedures to be used for the selection of external reviewers for tenure and promotion reviews. The external reviewers will be informed of the details regarding their selection and the use of their letters. No prospective external reviewer shall be contacted prior to consultation with the appropriate dean.

DRC statements of procedures and criteria must be reviewed every five years by the department/school/program, the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, and the Provost in that

order. The office of the Provost will notify departments, schools, and programs on September 1st of a given academic year that their documents are scheduled for review. Once reviewed, department/school/program statements showing planned changes will be forwarded to CAFT no later than September 1st of the following academic year. Reviews by CAFT and the Provost, and responses by the department/school/program, if necessary, normally will be concluded prior to May 1st so that updated documents may be distributed on that date to faculty anticipating reviews for reappointment, tenure, or promotion during the subsequent academic year. A cover sheet will provide signatures and dates to document the actions of each of the three parties. Should either CAFT or the Provost ask the department/school/program for changes, the new text will next be forwarded to CAFT for approval before it is forwarded to the Provost. The above procedures will also apply when review of DRC statements is initiated by or motivated by purposes other than the five-year review cycle. DRC statements should display prominently the date on which they received final approval. The department/school/program chairperson/director will provide each member of the department/school/program faculty, upon their appointment, with a copy of the current, approved DRC statement. In all matters except timeline, candidates shall adopt the URC and DRC statements of procedures and criteria defined at their time of appointment, unless they choose to adopt the current guidelines by notifying the DRC chair in writing prior to the URC's candidate meeting in May.

II. The URC Criteria

The University Review Committee seeks to confirm that each faculty member under review is progressing suitably in an evolving personal plan of professional development; that this plan is appropriate to the individual, legitimate to the discipline, and of value to the department, school, or program in question; and that the faculty members' record signifies present and future levels of achievement commensurate with the University's expectations of fine teaching, estimable scholarly or artistic accomplishment, and active commitment to the well-being of the University community.

Because it respects and supports diversity in the professional aims and accomplishments of faculty members, the University Review Committee does not attempt to measure individuals against a particular set of narrowly defined requirements but attempts to assure that department/school/program standards and judgments, that may have a particular disciplinary orientation, are of a consistent quality throughout the University. When reviewing DRC evaluations, the URC attempts to recognize teacher-scholars of various descriptions whose excellence is affirmed by students, by colleagues, and by members of a larger academic community.

The following are guidelines for each stage in the progression toward tenure.

Second-year: retention. A candidate retained beyond the second year has successfully completed all requirements for the Ph.D. or other appropriate terminal degree, and has otherwise inspired department/school/program confidence in the likelihood of future satisfactory progress toward tenure. The candidate has proved a capable and effective teacher. Efforts to ameliorate any early-career teaching problems are so encouraging as to justify further commitment on the part of the University. The candidate has initiated projects beyond the dissertation that give promise of a long-term program of scholarship.

Fourth-year: retention. A successful candidate at this stage has consistently demonstrated highly competent and committed teaching indicative of further development toward excellence, has produced publications or other appropriate scholarly work of high quality, and has begun to assume a share of responsibility for the affairs of the University.

Sixth-year: tenure and promotion. A candidate recommended for tenure has sustained a record of fine teaching which appears to assure long-term excellence. The candidate's scholarly or artistic work has matured, earning the esteem of department/school/program colleagues and experts outside the University. Finally, the candidate has contributed significantly to department, inter-department, or University affairs.

If there are any third-year or fifth-year candidates, their criteria for consideration are interpolated between those defined for the other groups.

III. Review Materials

The University Review Committee bases its deliberations exclusively on data contained in materials submitted by DRCs, on previous official communications involving retention decisions, and on any additional materials solicited in consultation with DRCs and candidates. Furthermore, the DRC shall base its deliberations exclusively on data contained in materials submitted by the candidate and outside evaluators. The candidate will have the right to review and respond to all materials considered by the DRC in its deliberations.

All persons contributing material to an evaluation – be they students, members of a candidate's department/school/program and/or DRC, other members of the University, or outside reviewers – must do so by reporting or submitting their information directly to the DRC for its consideration. With the exception of Student Evaluation of Teaching forms, all statements must be signed by the contributor. Statements from those not on the DRC are kept confidential in order to assure independent and candid judgments. The DRC chairs must provide candidates and DRC committee members with anonymous copies of communications received from all sources, including outside evaluators, students, alumni, and colleagues. The candidate receives a copy of the DRC review and of any minority reports that may accompany it.

Once a DRC has submitted its documented recommendation, moreover, no additions of either fact or opinion may be made without the URC's prior approval. Should members of a DRC determine that unavoidably late material is of sufficient importance – a letter from a dilatory outside reviewer, for example, or acceptance of a manuscript for publication, or a major misunderstanding which somehow has survived the review process – they may contact the college dean to request permission to submit the material after subjecting it to the usual provisions for evaluation, disclosure, and candidate response.

The URC may secure, after consultation with the candidate, additional evidence concerning the quality of a candidate's teaching and scholarship. Since such a request usually entails an extension of the review period beyond December 15, the URC in practice makes these requests only in those rare instances when it finds itself unable to reach a decision because of insufficient evaluative material or poor documentation; in such instances the Committee specifies the additional material required and requests the DRC to evaluate it.

It is of great importance that DRC reviews be as carefully evaluative and well documented as possible. Although content and organization vary somewhat according to disciplinary preference, the University Review Committee normally expects to receive all items listed on the attached check-list.

The following comments on certain of these items are intended to assist individuals and departments/schools/programs in the preparation of reviews.

Curriculum vitae. In addition to the usual summary of education and professional experience, the vita includes a list of scholarly or artistic accomplishments, grouped by type. (For example, a list of written scholarship might be separated into books, articles published in referred journals, conference papers, unpublished manuscripts, etc.) See “Information for Candidates for Retention and Tenure” (Spring 1998) for additional suggestions regarding the description of materials at various stages of completion. If a list of courses taught during the review period is not part of the curriculum vitae, it should be added separately to the dossier.

Candidate's statement. Statements prepared by candidates interpreting their ongoing professional expectations and aims are extremely helpful to Committee members. They serve to orient the Committee, to suggest the standards of evaluation the candidates themselves believe to be appropriate, and to inform the Committee of each person's assessment of his or her own position in the University with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service to the University community. For suggestions on the content and format of these statements, see individual DRC documents and “Information for Candidates for Retention and Tenure” (Spring 1998).

DRC evaluation of the candidate. This statement summarizes the information that the DRC has collected, carefully evaluates this information in light of the individual's own goals and the needs and criteria of the department/school/program and University, discusses possible alternative interpretations of the data available, and points out where (and why) disciplinary considerations are particularly important to the proper evaluation of materials. If necessary, DRC reviews are prefaced with a statement that informs the URC of unique disciplinary contexts and how they may pertain to a candidate being reviewed. DRC reviews shall indicate the bases for the recommendations and, in so doing, provide the URC with a statement that clearly presents an evaluation as well as an analysis of the candidate in each of the review areas.

Evaluation of teaching includes discussion of strengths and weaknesses, based on evidence described below. DRC reviews should provide a critical evaluation of faculty teaching by considering at least three sources of information: (1) Peer input on classroom instruction – by examination of course materials and the candidate's self-statement, (2) Student input including both student evaluation of teaching forms and, for a tenure review, student and alumni letters collected in a systematic fashion, and (3) Peer input on broader contributions to the educational program as a whole that go beyond classroom instruction. Each of these three areas must be given substantial emphasis (as defined in the department/school/program's approved statement of review procedures and criteria) in the evaluation of a faculty member's teaching. Peer input on classroom instruction should be given the most emphasis, followed by student input, followed by peer input on the candidate's broader contributions. Departments/schools/programs may develop additional means for gathering peer input on teaching, such as classroom observations and student input on teaching, such as focus groups, interviews, and exit surveys.

Each course taught by the faculty member under review will solicit feedback from the students using the approved Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) form. Forms will be administered using the approved protocols and students will be informed of the import and purposes of the SETs. For a tenure review, each department, school, or program will also solicit letters evaluating teaching from students and alumni using the approved process and templates. Each department, school, or program may additionally employ a method of involving students and/or faculty in the DRC evaluation of teaching (including advising) beyond the completion of written course evaluations and student letters.

For substantive matters, candidates shall adopt the URC and DRC statements of procedures and criteria defined at their time of appointment, unless they choose to adopt the current guidelines by notifying the DRC chair in writing prior to the URC's candidate meeting in May.

Evaluation of scholarship includes an assessment of the quality and significance of the candidate's published or creative work and of the reputation of the journals, presses, professional meetings, etc., where the candidate's work has appeared.

Evaluation of service addresses the candidate's quality as a colleague and effectiveness as a participant in campus life.

Contributions from colleagues. Faculty members who have special knowledge of a candidate, acquired perhaps through shared teaching or scholarly projects, may contribute individual written statements for consideration in the DRC review. Such contributions are limited to the purposes of the review.

Minority report. DRC members may submit separate reports if they disagree with the majority recommendation or find their views inadequately presented in their committee's review statement. Such reports are submitted to the DRC and disclosed to the candidate. Minority reports are subject to the same limitations with regard to content as the DRC report.

Department/program/school chairperson's recommendation. In accordance with the Faculty Handbook, III.K.1, "Should the chairperson and the department committee not concur, both the committee's and the chairperson's recommendations are conveyed." Department/program/school chair/director's recommendations are subject to the same limitations with regard to content as the DRC

report.

Candidate's response. A candidate may respond in writing to a DRC's final evaluation document, which shall include any minority reports, department/program/school chair/director's recommendations, and other contributions from colleagues. The candidate should present his or her response directly to the DRC for inclusion along with all other review materials in the package submitted to the URC.

Letters from outside evaluators. Tenure decisions require letters from at least three outside evaluators. The DRC will solicit letters from outside reviewers selected by the DRC following the concurrence of the candidate and the appropriate college dean. DRCs should provide a two- or three-sentence biography of each outside evaluator, including the candidate's personal and/or professional relationship to the evaluator.

Additional documentation. Additional documentation may include, but is not limited to, letters from colleagues, unsolicited materials, results of student interviews, and referees' reports or published reviews of scholarly work. The content of such contributions is limited to the purposes of the review. In all cases, this documentation must be received by the DRC, with redacted versions forwarded to the candidate in a reasonable amount of time prior to the date that the candidate's materials are due to the DRC.

IV. The URC's review

During October, the college deans present to the URC their lists of candidates for retention and tenure. They apprise the Committee of all special contractual provisions or other formal agreements between the administration and individual candidates. All conflicts of interest shall be disclosed and resolved at the beginning of this process.

At all three levels of review (second/third-, fourth/fifth-, and sixth-year), each candidate's materials will be reviewed by a subcommittee of three URC members. Each such subcommittee will consist of two faculty members of the URC and one administrator (either a dean or the provost). The entire URC will read the short files for every review candidate. Each subcommittee will present its findings to the entire URC for discussion, deliberation, and decision. All non-recused URC members will read and review the full review file for all cases that a subcommittee or any URC member deems problematic (e.g., cases that might have a negative decision).

Typically the URC deliberates from October through January, considering separately each of several groups of candidates: early-career (typically second year), pretenure (typically fourth year) and tenure (typically sixth year). Committee members complete their discussion of all candidates in a given group, then considering each candidate in turn, formally voice individual yes or no votes; the Committee may elect to postpone its vote pending more information from a candidate or a DRC. Seven of the eight Committee members vote; the officially designated alternate votes only to replace a member who belongs to the candidate's DRC, department/school/program, has a conflict of interest, or is incapacitated. The chair (and all others who wish) records the vote (which is confidential, as are all parts of the Committee's deliberation), and the chair coordinates advice on the content of the official letter of notification.

In compliance with the Faculty Handbook, II.C.5 ("In individual instances, the President may request the Committee to extend its review and/or reconsider its judgment"), the entire Committee, upon completing its work, meets with the president to transmit the results of its deliberations.

For each candidate under review, a URC member composes the body of a letter of notification. The URC reviews and revises each letter and the college deans format and sign the letters. The letters to second and fourth year candidates highlight important elements of the Committee's reaction to each set of review materials, and may offer specific suggestions for improvement. Prior to sending out the letters, the college deans apprise each individual, department/school/program chairperson, and DRC chairperson involved of any forthcoming negative decision. On or before December 15 college deans, on behalf of the URC, send out the letters of notification in second through fifth year review cases. Candidates under review for tenure will be notified no later than February 1.

V. Appeals

Careful attention to the foregoing procedures on the part of individuals under review, their departments, school, or programs, and members of the University Review Committee should serve to eliminate mistaken decisions caused by incomplete or misunderstood information. However, if a faculty member has reason to believe that the Committee's decision to terminate his or her contract has resulted from uncorrected erroneous or from misleading or missing information not attributable to an omission on the part of the candidate, he or she may present to the Committee, no later than January 15 in second through fifth year review cases and no later than February 15 for cases under review for tenure, a written request for reconsideration, specifying the substantive grounds on which it is based. (Requests for reconsideration based on procedural grounds normally are made to CAFT, not the URC.) If the Committee decides to grant the request, it will so inform the individual promptly. Requests for reconsideration based on substantive issues shall be directed to the URC before any appeal based on procedural issues is made to CAFT. An appeal to CAFT will foreclose the right of the candidate to appeal to the URC for reconsideration.

CHECK-LIST OF CONTENTS

Review of:

By (list of members of DRC):

Date:

Materials Provided by the Candidate:

- _____ 1. Current curriculum vitae
- _____ 2. List of all courses taught during review period, with syllabi
- _____ 3. Candidate's statement
- _____ 4. All written scholarship and (where relevant) documentation of artistic work
- _____ 5. Other documents or data; please specify

- _____ 6. Candidate's response (if any) to the DRC evaluation

Materials Provided by the Department/Program/School:

- _____ 7. Copy of CAFT- and Provost-approved statement of procedures and criteria
- _____ 8. DRC's recommendation to the URC
- _____ 9. DRC's evaluation of the candidate
- _____ 10. Summary of all teaching evaluation results using the appropriate template*.
- _____ 11. A compilation of SET results for each course using the appropriate template*, one copy for each course.
- _____ 12. A complete transcription of all student comments from the SETs
- _____ 13. Any teaching evaluation letters solicited from students and alumni
- _____ 14. Additional evidence of student and/or faculty evaluation of teaching and advising, as specified by the DRC statement of procedures and criteria, and a statement explaining how this evidence was obtained
- _____ 15. Three or more letters from outside evaluators (required for promotion and tenure and secured with the concurrence of the candidate and the dean)
- _____ 16. Minority report, if submitted, or other department/school/program statements considered
- _____ 17. Other documents that were considered in accordance with faculty policy; please specify:

*Templates may be found at www.bucknell.edu/xxxxx.html