

# Committee on Appointments and Promotions

## Notes for Nominators and Advocates

The Nominator and Advocate are members of each Joint Promotion Committee. The Joint Promotion Committee consists of six voting members from the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP) and two non-voting members, the Nominator and Advocate.

The Nominator is normally the Department Head or a tenured full professor at WPI. Before nomination, the Nominator should discuss with the candidate the strengths and weaknesses of their case based on the promotion criteria and eligibility including time in rank. Departmental promotion procedures should assure equitable treatment of all eligible candidates and should be selective so that only well-qualified candidates are nominated. The Advocate is normally a full-time WPI faculty member who agrees to serve with the Nominator as a non-voting member of a Joint Promotion Committee.

As members of the joint committee, the Nominator and Advocate have access to all material submitted during a promotion review and they attend all meetings of a joint committee. They are presumably well acquainted with the candidate's record, and therefore are able to put into context the quality and external impact of the candidate's contributions across teaching, scholarship and service.

Before the review of Tenured/Tenure-Track promotion cases, the joint committee identifies External Reviewers. As described in the Faculty Handbook (Section Two, D.2.3), the Nominator and Advocate each identify potential external reviewers and the Joint Committee then develops a priority list of reviewers. On behalf of the Joint Committee, the Nominator invites individuals from this priority list to serve as external reviewers until at least five to six external peers agree to write letters of appraisal.

During the initial discussion by the joint committee, the Chair will highlight the promotion criteria for the position in the Faculty Handbook and then invite the Nominator and Advocate to summarize briefly the case for promotion. The committee will have read the Nominator's detailed letter of nomination, so this invitation serves to open the wider discussion. The Advocate may amplify or briefly add a few remarks before the committee as a whole discusses any aspect of the case in light of the promotion criteria. Members of the committee may comment on strengths and weaknesses, ask questions, or identify missing or confusing material. All members of the Joint Committee observe strict rules of confidentiality during all phases of the promotion review.

Typical issues that might arise: indicators of high quality teaching; the relative standing of journals in the field; disciplinary or departmental expectations about levels of funding or number of publications; whether conference and workshop papers are important in the field; the role of undergraduate projects or graduate theses in the department; comments in student evaluations; conventions about the order of authors in a publication; typical citation counts; forms that scholarly artifacts may take besides peer-reviewed articles; the role of community engagement; the independence of external reviewers.

During this initial discussion, the joint committee examines the strengths and weaknesses highlighted by peer reviewers and identifies contextual factors and any missing or unclear information. Gathering relevant information about contextual, missing or unclear items may reduce the potential for misinterpretation and limit the influence of implicit or explicit bias.

One outcome of the first meeting may be a list of action items for the Nominator. Action items might include requests for additions or clarifications to the CV, updates on the status of grants or papers, improved organization of material (such as citation indexes or indicators of external impact), or requests

for additional letters of reference. The Nominator handles most of these issues by contacting the candidate, who should provide whatever was requested to the Executive Assistant, Faculty Governance Office before the beginning of Term B. The exception is that requests for new external letters are handled independently of the candidate, who must not be informed of the name external reviewers or the content of any letters of appraisal.

In advance of any joint committee meetings, the Nominator and Advocate have access to all of the candidate's material on Sharepoint as well as to hardcopies at the Faculty Governance Office. The meeting time and date are scheduled in the final weeks prior to relevant academic term.

The joint committee ordinarily meets once during Term B to make a recommendation on each nomination for promotion. For Tenured/Tenure-Track (TTT) cases, any "homework" identified at the first meeting is reported before a final discussion and vote at the B-Term meeting. For Non-Tenured/Tenure-Track (NTT) cases, the Chair or the Tracker should contact the Nominator in advance with any "homework" questions about contextual, missing or unclear items so that these may be provided at this meeting. Typically the discussion and vote on NTT nominations take place at a single meeting during Term B.

In all TTT or NTT cases, when all the members of the Joint Promotion Committee agree that there has been sufficient discussion, a vote is taken by the six voting members of the Joint Committee for or against promotion (no abstentions) by means of a secret ballot, with the majority ruling. By the end of Term B, the Joint Committee forwards to the Dean and the Provost a letter conveying the result of its vote as a unitary recommendation for or against promotion and summarizing the salient reasons for its recommendation.

The Provost may ask to meet with the Joint Committee to discuss any of its recommendations, and must meet with the Joint Committee in the case of potential disagreement. If necessary, this meeting usually takes place in January. Detailed information about the criteria and procedures for promotion are in the Faculty Handbook.

Any questions about the candidate's nomination or the committee procedures should be addressed to the Chair of COAP or to the Tracker for this case. Organizational questions about meeting locations, times, dates, etc., can be addressed to the Executive Assistant, Faculty Governance Office.

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