

Summary of Common Procedural Issues 2013-14 Tenure Review

The following is a summary of procedural problems that were commonly noted during the review of tenure dossiers submitted to the Office of the Vice President & Provost in 2013-14, including policy references and suggestions for good practice. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of procedural issues, but a compendium of errors commonly made across the University. For more complete guidance on the tenure review process, please consult the Academic Administrative Procedures Manual (<http://aapm.utoronto.ca/tenure-review-0>).

Policy Reference:

Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments

PDAD&C #134, revised 2004-05: *The Tenure Review Process and Tenure Checklist*

A. Tenure Committee Composition

A(1). *Collaborator on committee:* When the tenure committee includes a collaborator or former supervisor of the candidate, a concern over conflict of interest may arise. PDAD&C #134 states that ‘A person who has collaborated with the candidate or who has supervised his or her work as a graduate student should normally not be appointed to the tenure or internal evaluation committees’. This is particularly problematic if the collaborator is the committee chair; PDAD&C #134 goes on, ‘If the Chair is in this position, this would be sufficient reason to seek permission from the division head and the Provost for the Chair of the department to be replaced as chair of the committee.’

B. Internal Committee Issues

B(1). *Unsigned committee report:* The internal reading committee and the internal teaching committee should each produce a single, signed report. Members of each committee may come to different conclusions on the excellence or competence of the candidate’s research or teaching, but a single, signed report from each committee must be provided to the tenure committee and included in the file for the President’s review.

B(2). *Collaborator or supervisor on internal committee:* PDAD&C #134 states that ‘A person who has supervised the candidate’s graduate work or who has collaborated with the candidate should not serve as a member of the committee’ that prepares the report on the candidate’s research, and that ‘a thorough and arm’s-length review of teaching effectiveness must be made for each candidate’. This suggests that a person who has supervised or collaborated with the candidate should not be invited to serve as a member of either internal committee.

B(3). *Non-tenured faculty member on reading committee:* PDAD&C #134 states that ‘Each committee member should be competent to review the research dossier carefully and rigorously’. Normally this is assumed to mean that the reading committee will consist of tenured faculty members rather than clinical faculty or faculty who hold contractually limited or status-only appointments. While it is the case that a non-tenured faculty member may have the expertise necessary to review a research dossier carefully and rigorously, it is important that the committee

members have a thorough understanding of the tenure process and standards within the department. In cases where a non-tenured faculty member is the subject expert, they may serve in place of one tenured member.

B(4). *No members of home department on reading committee:* The *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* provides that “divisions and departments shall establish internal reading and evaluation committees to assess and prepare written evaluations of material presented by the candidate.” In some cases, it may be appropriate to include members external to the department or division in order to comply with PDAD&C #134 which states that ‘Each committee member should be competent to review the research dossier carefully and rigorously’. However, the policy contemplates that the committee provide an evaluation by a departmental or, in the case of a single department faculty, divisional committee, and it is important that the committee includes membership from the department or division.

B(5). *Cursory report of reading committee:* Occasionally the report of the internal reading committee submitted with the tenure dossier is brief and demonstrates little more than a summary of the candidate’s CV. PDAD&C #134 states that the members of the reading committee ‘should read the candidate’s published work and any other material submitted by the candidate for evaluation, together with material gathered by the Chair...’. Thorough consideration of these materials should be in evidence in the report.

B(6). *Insufficient evaluative material considered by teaching committee:* PDAD&C #134 requires that the teaching committee conducts a careful and rigorous evaluation of the candidate’s teaching in accordance with the divisional guidelines. In addition, it states that ‘The report should be more than a summary of student course evaluations’ and will include a review of the candidate’s teaching dossier and any other materials that have been submitted. Material such as course evaluations, student letters, evidence of their role as a graduate supervisor, and the opinions of colleagues with first-hand knowledge of the candidate’s teaching should be thoroughly considered, and the report of the internal teaching committee should reflect this.

B(7). *Report of teaching committee does not refer to divisional guidelines:* Section 15 of the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* states that ‘written assessments of the candidate’s teaching ability shall be prepared in accordance with guidelines approved for the relevant department or division. These guidelines specify the manner in which the division will provide the committee with evidence from the individual’s peers and from students...’. Divisional guidelines provide context for the evidence presented and its use and should therefore be explicitly referred to in the report of the teaching committee. In addition, PDAD&C #134 states that the *Provostial Guidelines for Developing Written Assessments of Effectiveness of Teaching in Promotion and Tenure Decisions* are intended as ‘a framework for the development by each division of the approved divisional guidelines’ which ‘*have the force of policy*’. Neither the *Provostial Guidelines* nor the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* should be used in place of divisional guidelines in the evaluation of teaching.

B(8). *Reading committee does not assess excellence or competence in research:* While it is understood that descriptions of a candidate’s publications and research accomplishments may implicitly denote a judgment of competence or excellence to scholars in the field, the report that

is submitted as part of the dossier for the President's review should make this judgment in explicit terms. PDAD&C #134 states that 'while the Internal Reading Committee may not make a recommendation for or against tenure it is imperative that the committee state clearly its evaluation of the candidate's work against the stated criteria. The committee should advise whether in its view excellence, or competence, has been found or not found'.

C. Collaborator Statements

C(1). *Inappropriate collaborator statements:* Frequently the file prepared for the President's review includes an adequate number of collaborator statements, but rather than providing a simple statement on the nature of the collaboration and the extent of the candidate's contribution, these offer extended references for the candidate. PDAD&C #134 recommends that 'if the candidate has collaborators, information must be sought by the Chair from them and from the candidate about the nature of the collaboration and the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution'. Good practice would suggest that the Chair should request from the candidate an annotated list of publications, providing details of the candidate's contribution. The Chair may then circulate this information to collaborators asking for a simple confirmation or correction of the candidate's statement. [Appendix A](#) provides an example of co-author statements provided by the candidate, and a template letter from the Chair requesting verification.

C(2). *No collaborator statements / Too few collaborator statements:* Where a candidate's research record includes a number of co-authored articles or collaborative research grants, it is difficult to adequately assess that record without statements from collaborators which attest to the candidate's contributions. PDAD&C #134 recommends that 'if the candidate has collaborators, information must be sought by the Chair from them and from the candidate about the nature of the collaboration and the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution'. Enough statements should be sought to cover the period and range of research being evaluated. It is recognized that the number of co-authors typical of publications in certain disciplines would make an exhaustive solicitation of statements impractical. In cases where there are numerous contributors, the candidate should indicate which co-author can most readily comment on their contribution to the publication, and the Chair should seek a statement from that individual. All collaborator statements should be included in the tenure dossier.

D. External Referees and Reference Letters

D(1). *Non-standard letter requesting review sent to referee:* An improperly designed letter requesting assessment of the candidate can result in an inappropriate written assessment (most commonly, one that does not assess competence or excellence, or one that makes a recommendation for or against tenure). We encourage the use of the letter template (A4) included in PDAD&C #134, which has been designed to use neutral language in requesting an assessment of the candidate.

D(2). *Number and balance of external reviewer letters:* A well-assembled dossier will contain reference letters from at least six external referees, the balance of which will be drawn from the list prepared by the Chair. PDAD&C #134 states that 'the effective and fair use of external referees is critical to ensuring that we make high quality tenure decisions. Towards this end, we

need to be rigorous with respect to the number and the choice of referees [...] A well-documented file will contain six or more external references of which at least three are from outside of the candidate's list'. It goes on to say that 'where the dossier does not contain such letters the Chair must justify the choice of referees and the report of the tenure committee should demonstrate that the committee explicitly considered the slate of referees in its deliberation'.

D(3). *Inappropriate external reviewer:* As independent assessors of the candidate's accomplishments, external referees should not have collaborated on publications or grants with the candidate. Thesis, graduate and post-doctoral supervisors are generally regarded as collaborators as well. PDAD&C #134 states that 'an opinion may be sought from the candidate's former supervisor but, in general, external referees should be chosen for their ability to judge the candidate's work at arm's length. Collaborators should not be referees...'. If there is no other alternative than to contact a candidate's supervisor, this should be clearly explained in the Statement of Reasons. If a letter is inadvertently requested from a collaborator, this letter should be weighted accordingly and consideration should be given as to whether an additional letter from an arm's length referee should be sought.

D(4). *Referees of rank below Full Professor:* In some emerging fields, it may be necessary to solicit letters from scholars at more junior ranks. PDAD&C #134 states that '...the views of senior scholars of international stature carry much more weight than those from individuals early in their careers' and that 'at least three letters should be from senior faculty members of other universities' All letters should be from faculty members who themselves hold tenure. In the case 'where the dossier does not contain such letters the Chair must justify the choice of referees and [...] demonstrate that the committee explicitly considered the slate of referees in its deliberations'.

D(5). *Reference letters unsigned or not on letterhead:* To ensure their validity, letters of reference must be on official institutional letterhead and must be signed, whether received by hard copy or electronically. An e-mail assessment must be followed up by a signed letter, and only signed letters on letterhead should be included in the dossier.

D(6). *Unnecessary details on the solicitation of external reviews:* Occasionally the tenure dossier includes information on the process of soliciting reviews from external referees that is neither required by policy nor helpful to the tenure review process. PDAD&C #134 states: 'The dossier forwarded to the Provost's Office should contain a list of the referees proposed by the candidate and of those selected by the Chair and a brief explanation of the basis of choice of all of the referees who were selected and their qualifications. This explanation should be available for the tenure committee.

The list of referees and justification for choosing them that is included in the tenure dossier and made available to the committee should be limited to those referees who actually provide reviews. In particular, providing information on referees who declined to provide an assessment should be avoided. At best, such information is unnecessary, and at worst, it may inappropriately influence the consideration of evidence by members of the tenure committee.

D(7). *Inappropriate summary of referees' credentials:* PDAD&C #134 states that 'the dossier forwarded to the Provost's Office should contain a list of the referees proposed by the candidate

and of those selected by the Chair and a brief explanation of the basis of choice of all of the referees who were selected and their qualifications'. To meet this expectation, a brief biography summarizing the credentials of each referee and the rationale for their selection is sufficient. Providing a full CV, detailed research statement, or material copied from a departmental web page is not necessary or helpful.

D(8). *Peer status of referees' institutions:* While expertise in particular areas may sometimes reside in universities that we would not usually consider our peers, PDAD&C #134 stresses that 'referees should be individuals of international stature in their field and will normally be distinguished senior members of the faculty of [from a range of] universities which are major centres of activity in the candidate's field' and that those in less prestigious institutions may be 'less well placed to assess accomplishments in an internationally significant research university'. The biographies provided should justify the choice of referee and the tenure committee should demonstrate that it has explicitly considered the list of referees in its deliberations.

D(9). *Cursory reference letters:* Frequently we receive dossiers which contain letters from reviewers which summarize the candidate's CV with little consideration of the actual research dossier. PDAD&C #134 states that 'thorough reviews carry much more weight than cursory judgements'. The tenure committee should carefully consider the letters received and determine whether a letter provides a thorough assessment of the candidate's research or whether it should be given less weight and an additional letter sought.

E. Dossier Composition

E(1). *CV gives insufficient detail of research grants:* Section 15 of the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* specifies that the CV prepared by a candidate should include a 'list of all research or other grants obtained, together with the name of the granting agency, the date, the duration, the amount of award and any research contracts entered into'. Some CVs submitted for review neglect to include one or more of these important details, particularly those related to the award amount and the names of co-authors/collaborators. It is also good practice for the candidate to detail her or his role (as principal or co-investigator) on each of these grants.

E(2). *CV gives insufficient detail of student supervision:* Section 15 of the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* specifies that the CV prepared by a candidate for tenure should include 'a list of senior undergraduate students and graduate students supervised, indicating whether primary or sole supervision or else secondary or joint supervision, together with their thesis topics and the dates'. Some CVs submitted for tenure review neglect to include one or more of these important details, particularly the candidate's supervisory role and the status of the supervised work (ongoing or completed). Although not explicit in policy, it is understood that the same comments apply to the supervision of post-doctoral researchers.

E(3). *Teaching and/or research dossier included:* It is neither necessary nor helpful to include a complete teaching dossier or research dossier (with articles) in the dossier submitted to the Provost's Office for the President's review. Please consult The Tenure Dossier Checklist

(available at <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/procedures/tenure.htm>) for a list of materials that should be submitted as part of the dossier.

E(4). *No student letters:* Section 15 of the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments* asks for evidence from students to assess the candidate's teaching ability, and PDAD&C #134 suggests evidence obtained from current and former students as a means to assist in the evaluation of teaching. Consequently, to facilitate the assessment of the tenure candidate's teaching, the tenure dossier should include letters from undergraduate and/or graduate students. Best practice suggests that such letters be solicited by the committee (not by the candidate), that they do not derive from reviews unrelated to tenure, and that they are representative of the range of courses and levels taught by the candidate.

E(5). *No quantitative teaching evaluations:* Summaries of quantitative teaching evaluations are one of the most effective means of addressing the concern noted in PDAD&C #134, that there has been 'considerable unevenness across the University in the quality and scope of the documentation of teaching'. Together with student letters, they also help meet the expectation of evidence from students asked for in Section 15 of the *Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments*. Consequently, to facilitate the assessment of the tenure candidate's teaching, the tenure dossier should include summaries of quantitative teaching evaluations.

E(6). *Inclusion of ballots and recording of the vote:* Some files prepared for the President's review are submitted with the ballots used by the tenure committee or with detailed breakdown of the votes for each of the criteria for tenure. PDAD&C #134 states:-

The tenure committee recommends as a committee, not a collection of individuals. The written report for the President may record the vote of the committee itself; however the ballots showing how each member voted should be kept confidential within the committee, and are not to be transmitted to the Dean or the President.

The Statement of Reasons provided in the file for the President should include the vote of the committee on the final recommendation but not on each of the criteria for tenure. The ballots should be retained by the department.

F. Statement of Reasons

F(1). *Insufficient Statement of Reasons:* Occasionally the file prepared for the President's review includes a Statement of Reasons that does not provide details of the committee's deliberations and its weighing of the evidence before it. PDAD&C #134 states:

It is very important that the reasons for the recommendation, whether positive or negative, be fully articulated both for the President and for the candidate (who may appeal once the President takes a negative decision). The reasons for the decision should be discussed by the committee and the draft report reviewed by each member of the tenure committee. The final written report is sent to the Provost's Office, through the division head.

Accordingly, the Statement of Reasons should provide details of the tenure committee's consideration of the evidence rather than simply reiterating material included in the Summary of Evidence prepared for the candidate.

G. Summary of Evidence

G(1). *Cursory or unorganized summary of evidence:* Sometimes the Summary of Evidence prepared for the candidate provides only a cursory account of the evidence that the tenure committee will consider, or consists of excerpts from the evidence that are difficult to understand because of a lack of context or organization. Such a Summary of Evidence may be damaging to the candidate's chances of receiving a positive tenure recommendation because it may prevent her or him from fully understanding the evidence before the committee and deciding whether it is necessary to respond. When preparing the Summary of Evidence, make sure that it adheres to the standard set out in PDAD&C #134:

...it is important that the summary be sufficiently detailed that the candidate knows the evidence before the committee and could, if desired, supplement the dossier with a written response, or by appearing before the committee to make a statement. The information given to the candidate concerning the process and the evidence should be as complete as possible consistent with maintaining confidentiality (where possible, individual summaries of each letter or report should be given, but without attribution).

G(2). *Summary of evidence omits material:* Often the Summary of Evidence prepared for the candidate does not summarize important aspects of the internal committee reports, external appraisals or, most frequently, student comments. This is especially problematic where the omitted material provides evidence to which the candidate would likely want to respond. As indicated in the above extract from PDAD&C #134, the summary should be as detailed and complete as is necessary to inform the candidate's decision to respond and the response itself.

H. Correspondence with Candidate

H(1). *Letters to candidate not included:* Copies of all letters to the candidate mentioned in the 'Tenure Dossier Checklist' included as part of PDAD&C #134 (and available at <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/procedures/tenure.htm>) should be included in the tenure dossier. These include the letter notifying the candidate of his/her consideration for tenure, the letter to the candidate (including the Summary of Evidence) at time of the conveyance of the dossier to the tenure committee and invitation to appear before the committee, the letter notifying the candidate of a proposed negative recommendation with reasons and an invitation to respond (if relevant), and the letter notifying the candidate of the committee's final recommendation with respect to the awarding of tenure.

H(2). *No candidate acknowledgment of tenure committee membership:* PDAD&C #134 states that the tenure candidate 'retains her or his right to challenge the selected members of the tenure committee'. As evidence that the candidate has acknowledged the composition of the tenure committee, it is important that a record of her or his response to the list they have received is included in the tenure dossier.

Appendix A: Coauthor or Collaborator Statements

At the initial meeting with the candidate, the Chair should ask the candidate to prepare an annotated list of publications that provides details of their contribution to any collaborative or coauthored work listed on the CV. Providing a separate listing for each coauthor (and in the case of articles with many coauthors, indicating the most pertinent) will facilitate the process of contacting the collaborators to verify the candidate's contribution. Please see the example below:-

PROVIDED BY THE CANDIDATE

Professor A.J. Scientist – List of Coauthored Articles with contribution

Statements of Collaborations with Professor B. Wheel, Harbard University
Email: b.wheel@harbard.edu

Scientist, A.J. and B. Wheel. 2009. 'Pitfalls and perils'. Journal of Endless Academic Administration. 36(1): 15-24.

I am the lead author for this article and I took the lead role in writing and data analysis. The paper relies on data collected as a result of a shared grant where we are both principal investigators. I developed the framework for analysis, Wheel wrote the introduction and we jointly developed the conceptual framework. I took the lead in writing, data analysis and interpretation.

Statements of Collaborations with Professor H. Air, Pincerton University.
Email: h.air@pincerton.edu

Air, H., Wheel, B and A.J. Scientist. 2010. 'Meeting the bar'. Education Administration. 24(4): 76-132.

I am the third author for this article. The paper relies on data collected by Air and Wheel. We were all involved in the conceptualization of the research question and interpretations of the data. Air and Wheel took the lead in writing the text while I developed and integrated the quantitative analysis for the paper.

TEMPLATE EMAIL REQUESTING VERIFICATION

Dear Prof **,

Professor ** of the Department of ** at the University of Toronto is being considered for tenure and we would like to verify [her/his] statement as listed below regarding [his/her] contribution to scholarly work co-authored with you.

Your comments will be treated as confidential and will be seen only by members of the tenure committee. We would appreciate if you could send your comments by [date] either by mail to the Chair, Department of **, Faculty **, [address] or by email to [email address].

Thank you for your time.