RPT Internal Peer/Area/Research Committee Letters - Guidance to COE Committees

The purpose of the area or internal or research peer review letter is to report the committee’s evaluation of the intellectual products submitted by the candidate and to provide measures of scholarly impact. The letter should include a detailed explanation of the committee’s examination of the submitted intellectual products, including placing the candidate’s contributions in context and commenting on the importance and measurement of scholarly impact of the work.

The letter does not evaluate the candidate’s teaching or service contributions. The letter does NOT discuss grants or funding. The letter does NOT discuss quantity/productivity of research publications and/or presentations. The letter does NOT include a recommendation on the final outcome of the case. The letter does NOT contain a committee vote.

The Area/Internal/Research Committee’s letter is addressed to the School Chair and written on the committee chair’s school letterhead. In addition to the School Chair, the letter will be read and interpreted by the

- School RPT Committee
- COE RPT Committee, composed of faculty from every engineering school
- Dean of Engineering
- School Chairs from every engineering school
- Institute RPT Committee, composed of the Deans of each college, faculty from each college, and the Vice Provost
- Provost, and
- President.

In addition, in recent years many of the candidates have been requesting and receiving a copy of his/her RPT packets at the end of process, so the candidate is likely to eventually read the committee letter.

The Area/Internal/Research Committee’s letter is from everyone on the committee. Every member should sign the letter to confirm his/her participation in the case evaluation and careful review of the committee letter. If obtaining signatures of all the committee members is too difficult, the letter should be signed by the committee chair and should contain an explicit statement that all committee members participated in the case discussion and review of the letter, and that each committee member endorses the letter contents.

Letters should

- Cover all aspects of the committee’s evaluation, explaining strengths and concerns, placing the candidate’s contributions in context and commenting on the importance and the measurement of scholarly impact of the work, relative quality of journals where published, etc. There will be future readers of the committee letter who are not in engineering and will appreciate the perspective provided.
- Be careful not to be sidetracked by a single issue that dominates the evaluation and/or the letter contents.
- Reflect the committee discussion and evaluation. The tone of the letter should be consistent with the evaluation; e.g., a very positive letter should be the outcome of a very positive evaluation but not the opposite.
- Explicitly disclose all real or potential perception of conflicts of interests that committee members have with the candidates (e.g., committee member X served as a Co-PI on grant XXX with the candidate in 20XX; committee member Y co-authored YY papers with the candidate, none of which are part of the intellectual products under review;) and state that the committee member with the potential conflict has made an honest effort not to be influenced by it in his/her evaluation.
- Be kept confidential at all times.