

RPT Committee Letters --- Guidance to CoE School Committees

The *purpose* of the letter is to report the school committee's evaluation of the case. It includes the vote count and a complete explanation of the committee's comprehensive examination of the case.

The School RPT Committee's letter is **addressed to the School Chair** and **written on school letterhead**. In addition to the School Chair, the letter will be read and interpreted by the

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

All tenure-track faculty receive a copy of their reappointment package after completion of critical review. 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 School RPT Committee's letter is ***from everyone*** on the committee. The letter should be signed by the committee chair on behalf of the committee unless the school's process requires all committee members to sign the letter.

Letters should

- Include the date of committee discussion
- Be on school letterhead
- List all committee members and their faculty rank and title
- Clearly report the committee's vote and those present/absent for the case deliberations.
- Provide a detailed analysis of the candidate's materials in relation to each of the three criteria: creativity, teaching and service.
- The external letters should be discussed in a balanced way. Particular attention should be given to any negative comments.
- Cover all aspects of the case, explaining strengths and concerns, making it clear that every potential dimension was considered and evaluated by the committee. Committees should be careful not to be sidetracked by a single issue that dominates the discussion, overall vote, and/or letter from the committee.

- Reflect the committee discussion and evaluation. The tone of the letter should be consistent with the vote; e.g., a very positive letter should be the outcome of a very positive vote. An explanation must be provided for split votes and alternative thinking by a subset of the committee. It is helpful for the committee to thoroughly discuss all aspects of the case before the vote. This avoids potentially awkward discussions after the vote has occurred, where there is a single outlier vote, for example.
- Never predict the eventual outcome of this review or future reviews.
- Provide perspective on the candidate's research area, relative quality of journals where published, funding potential for area, relative challenge of teaching schedule, relative contribution significance of service, awards, special conventions in the school, etc. There will be future readers of the committee letter who are not in engineering and will appreciate the perspective provided.
- Never refer to external references by name or institution. References should be referred to by number.
- Be kept confidential at all times. For security reasons, most committees try to avoid the use of email for transfer of drafts and material.
- Committee members should explicitly disclose all real or potentially perceived 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. If the committee member deems they cannot serve impartially due to a significant conflict of interest (e.g., family relationships; close collaborations; advisor-advisee relationship; business relationships; or marked personal or professional conflicts), the member should not participate in discussion of the candidate and should vote "Abstain-required." In cases where a committee member does not want to vote on a case for reasons other than a conflict of interest, then the committee should vote "Abstain-other." Both cases of abstentions should be used rarely and in exceptional circumstances only

Template letter for school committee is on the next page.

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Chair

FROM: School of XXXX Engineering Committee for Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion: George P. Burdell (Professor – AE), Mickey Mouse (Associate Professor – BME), Georgia P. Burdell (Professor – CEE), and Buzz Tech (Associate Professor – ME) – Be sure to include all committee members with academic rank

DATE: August 30, 2019

RE: Promotion/Tenure of *(faculty candidate) (rank) (school)*

The School of XXX Engineering Committee for Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure met on August 30, 2019 to consider the tenure and/or promotion of *(faculty candidate)*. Present at the meeting were: *(names of members present)*. The committee voted as follows: Tenure – 5-Yes, 0-No, 1-Abstain Required, 0-Abstain Other, and 2 Absent; Promotion - 5-Yes, 0-No, 1-Abstain Required, 0-Abstain Other, and 2 Absent.

(Paragraphs to follow should be specific, direct and balanced. In this sample, the split votes should be explained.)

Conflict of Interest Disclosure: Be sure to indicate if the any of the committee members have collaborated with the promotion candidate and that this collaboration did not prevent an objective evaluation of the intellectual products. If there is no conflict, then state that as well.

Submitted on behalf of the committee,

(Committee Member, Title, School)