

Faculty Senate Professional Standards Committee (PSC) Operating & Voting Procedures

PSC Responsibilities & Membership (Source: Faculty Senate By-Laws)

7.1.5.2 Professional Standards Committee. This committee shall have responsibility for matters related to faculty professional standards and welfare, including items referred to in Sections 1.1a, 1.1h, 1.1i, 1.2b, and 1.2d. The Professional Standards Committee is advisory to the Provost on confidential personnel matters related to faculty reappointment, promotion, and tenure, as well as on the awarding of sabbatical leaves. Any eligible faculty member with no conflicting administrative responsibilities who holds the rank of Professor or Associate Professor, including Clinical, Extension, Library, or Research Professors or Associate Professors, may stand for election by his/her college or school to serve as its representative to the Professional Standards Committee. No member of the Professional Standards Committee shall be serving concurrently on the standards committee of his/her college or other unit specified in Section 7.1.2.1a.

7.1.2.1 Elected Members.

- a. **Number.** Except as described below, standing committees and standing subcommittees shall be composed of at least one member from each of the major academic units (the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Life Sciences, Education and Social Services, Engineering and Mathematics, and Medicine; the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Business Administration, and Natural Resources; and the Offices of Extension, and of the Libraries. A unit with more than 200 full-time eligible faculty members may elect one additional member to each standing committee and standing subcommittee.
- b. **Eligibility.** Any eligible faculty member may stand for election by his/her college or school to serve on a standing committee except as otherwise stated in these Bylaws.
- c. **Term.** Members of the standing committees shall be elected for three years or as otherwise stated in these Bylaws, starting on July 1. Terms shall be staggered so that approximately one-third of the standing committee members shall be elected each year.
- d. **Election.** The election of standing committee members shall be the responsibility of the individual college and school faculties. Elections shall be held no later than April of each year and shall be conducted by secret ballot distributed to all eligible faculty members of the college/school. An opportunity must be provided for all eligible faculty members to volunteer to run for election to Senate standing committees. The Faculty Senate shall supervise the elections of Senate Standing Committees; concerns regarding election irregularities must be communicated to the Senate President by May 1.
- e. **Vacancies.** If a standing committee member vacates his/her seat the vacancy shall be filled by a special election within the unit from which s/he was elected. The term of a member under these circumstances shall commence immediately and shall normally be for the unexpired term of the regularly elected member. If a standing committee member is granted leave for one year or less a replacement shall be elected by a special

election within the unit from which s/he was elected to take the absent standing committee member's seat for the period of the leave.

- f. Attendance. A standing committee member absent from three committee meetings in a calendar year in the absence of mitigating circumstances will be considered to have vacated his/her seat.
- g. Members of the Senate. A standing committee member may also serve as an Elected Senator. Standing committee members are members of the Senate without vote if not also an Elected Senator.

Committee Operating Procedures

Orientation

- In the early Fall (or as needed), the Chair provides orientation for newly elected PSC members (e.g., group or individual meeting or phone call; shares operating procedures).

Meetings (Dates, Times, Location)

- The PSC has a standing meeting time scheduled on Mondays from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. On occasion the length of the meeting time may be extended if required to meet deadlines. Elected members should have a schedule that allows for regular attendance at meetings on Monday afternoons at the designated time.
- Historically, the PSC meetings are held in the Howe Library, Dean's Conference room.
- *Fall semester:* The PSC may convene in late August or September to review a small number of off-cycle cases that require immediate action. Starting in mid-October the PSC will meet during the fall semester to review sabbatical applications with the goal of completing the committee's work, namely recommendations to the Provost, by late November or early December.
- *Spring semester:* During the Spring semester the main work of the PSC is to review reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) dossiers. The first meeting of the semester is typically scheduled for the first Monday of the semester after MLK Day and runs through mid to late April. Recommendations on all cases for faculty represented by United Academics are to be submitted to the Provost's Office no later than March 15th. Once those cases have been reviewed, the PSC reviews the RPT cases from the Larner College of Medicine. The Provost's Office may request off-cycle reviews at any time during contracted times of the semester (e.g., later in April or May after the main work of the PSC has been completed).
- It is the responsibility of the PSC Chair to notify all members of the specific dates, times, locations, and agendas of committee meetings.
- Throughout the academic year, the PSC may also spend meeting time discussing general issues of relevance to the work or functioning of the committee.

Materials

All faculty-related materials (i.e., sabbatical applications, RPT dossiers) will be made available from the Provost's office on a secure, SharePoint, web site. The PSC Chair will send the link to all members when it is available. Access to the secure web site requires a UVM net id and password to access.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to maintain the integrity of the review process. This means: (a) that all sabbatical and RPT documents that are downloaded from the secure web site should be stored appropriately (e.g., on a password protected/encrypted computer), (b) downloaded files should be deleted from digital devices (e.g., laptops, tablets) when they are no longer needed, (c) discussions about faculty members' materials and cases that occur during PSC meetings should not be discussed with anyone outside designated PSC meeting times or with any non-committee members, and (d) every effort should be made by all committee members to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality.

Preparation for Meeting Deliberations

- In advance of PSC meetings, all members are expected to review all faculty submissions, so they are prepared to discuss the cases and offer informed votes.
- Accessing attachments and links typically require downloading the files because some features do not work within the SharePoint platform. Faculty files should be deleted from PSC members' computers when they are no longer needed for deliberations (check both established files and folders as well as your computer's downloads folder).
- Early each semester the PSC Chair will supply all members with a slate of cases to be reviewed by date, including a list of primary and secondary reviewers. The Chair may assign a tertiary reviewer if deemed necessary (e.g., unusually complex or challenging cases).
- All designated reviewers should be prepared to present the case to the committee in case of a member absence.
- When members receive the slate of reviewer assignments at the beginning of each semester, they are asked to check for any potential conflicts of interest in their reviewer assignments. If so, they are asked to notify the Chair so that an adjustment can be made.
- If a member knows he or she will be absent when scheduled to present a case they are asked to either: (a) make arrangements with another member to switch cases and inform the chair, or (b) send a written summary by email to chair to present by proxy.

Meeting and Voting Procedures

- Designated first reviewers will present cases to the committee, following which the secondary reviewer(s) will have the opportunity to offer additional, independent perspectives.

Sabbatical review content typically includes: (a) faculty name and current rank, (b) department, (c) action being considered (type of sabbatical), (d) past sabbaticals and outcomes, (e) if applicable, external funding for sabbatical, (f) summary of sabbatical preparation (e.g., letters of support) objectives, timelines, and proposed outcomes, (g) assessment of overall quality of application, contributions to program/department and UVM, (h) any positive notables or concerns, (i) any other relevant considerations, and (j) recommendations at earlier levels of review.

RPT review content typically includes: (a) faculty name and current rank, (b) department, (c) action being considered (and pathway as appropriate e.g., clinical, research, tenure-track), (d) workload percentages by categories, (e) brief summary of topical focus of work, (f) summary of teaching, (g) summary of scholarship, (h) summary of service, (i) any positive notables or concerns, (j) summary of external letters, (k) votes and recommendations at earlier levels, and (l) any other perspectives deemed relevant to the PSC deliberations.

- Following presentation of each case, the full committee membership has an opportunity to make comments, ask questions, and discuss the merits of the case.
- Once discussion is completed, the Chair calls for and records a vote and any relevant comments to be shared with the Provost. Explanatory narrative comments will always be added in case of negative or split votes from the PSC. See voting procedures.

Voting Procedures

- All associate and full professors who are elected to the Professional Standards Committee have full and equal voting privileges on all cases, including those above rank, with the exception that members will be recused from voting on faculty in their home department (based on Resolution approved by the Faculty Senate 11-27-17).
- Concerning RPT review, members are expected to vote on faculty members within their own department at the department level and are recused from voting on members of their own department at the PSC level.
- All PSC members may vote on sabbatical bids, including those within one's home department since there is no department level faculty vote on sabbaticals.
- Members who are absent from meetings have the options of: (a) submitting a vote and comments by email to the Chair prior to meeting where a case will be discussed, or (b) not voting and being recorded as "absent".
- *The Tenure Review for Incoming Administrators with Faculty Appointments: Expedited Process*, was approved by the Faculty Senate on 26 November 2018 and implemented for the first time during the Spring 2019 semester. See details of the resolution posted on the Faculty Senate's PSC web page. The resolution's implementation and operational

procedures are being developed based on what is being learned during its initial use. At present, once materials are posted on the secure web site, the PSC Chair notifies members of the posting to request their independent review and tenure votes on the applicants. Votes are submitted to the PSC Chair within 5 working days. As with all reviews, any negative vote requires an explanation. Once all votes are received, if there is a consensus vote (in either direction), the vote is summarized and the Chair submits the results to the Provost's Office in the same format as standard (non-expedited) reviews. If the independent vote lacks consensus, the PSC Chair will engage the full PSC membership in a discussion, which may occur in a variety of ways (e.g., face-to-face, email, virtual meeting technologies). Once the vote is finalized, the Chair submits it to the Provost's Office in the same format as standard (non-expedited) reviews.

Definitions of Voting Terms

Yes: A "Yes" vote is a determination by a voting-eligible faculty member that an action under review (e.g., reappointment, promotion, tenure, sabbatical bid) has met the specified criteria for the action being considered.

No: A "No" vote is a determination by a voting-eligible faculty member that an action under review (e.g., reappointment, promotion, tenure, sabbatical bid) has not met one or more of the specified criteria for the action being considered. In such cases, in order for a "No" vote to be interpreted accurately by the Office of the Provost, it is essential to specify the reason(s) for a "No" vote.

Recusal: A recusal is recorded when a PSC member is ineligible to vote because they have already voted at an earlier level (e.g., voted at a departmental level and then recuses at the PSC level).

Abstain: An abstention occurs when a voting-eligible faculty member, who has the opportunity to vote, makes an active choice to vote neither "Yes" nor "No". As an active choice, abstention differs from not voting due to absence or recusal. The option to abstain is strongly discouraged, but may be an appropriate option in a small number of circumstances where a voting-eligible faculty member has a personal or professional relationship or other reasons that interfere with making a fair and unbiased determination. In such cases, in order to be interpreted accurately by reviewers at the next level, it is helpful to specify the reason(s) for an abstention if possible.

Absent: If a voting-eligible PSC member is not in attendance at a meeting and does not actively submit a proxy vote (i.e., Yes, No, Abstain) in writing (e.g., by email) to the Chair, the individual's vote will be recorded as "absent".

- When the review process is completed each semester, the votes and corresponding narrative will be submitted to the Office of the Provost.

Units Selecting Members to Join the PSC

- When a vacancy occurs within in a unit for an opening on the PSC, the Faculty Senate Office notifies the unit, which then holds an election for an associate or full professor to

represent them on PSC, regardless of when during the year any such vacancy occurs. Candidates should be informed of the PSC's Monday meeting schedule throughout the year to ensure their availability to attend.

Selecting a PSC Chair

- Each February the Faculty Senate office will contact all current PSC members to solicit nominations, including self-nominations, for Chair to serve during the upcoming academic term (beginning June 1st). Once nominations are received, the Faculty Senate office will conduct a vote on the nominated members and report the results to the PSC. It is important for this vote to be completed by the end of February each year to: (a) ensure a smooth transition if there will be a change in the PSC leadership, (b) avoid any gaps in PSC leadership that could occur over the summer months, and (c) to align the timing of this Chair decision with the annual workload process, since historically the PSC Chair receives one-course release to fulfill the duties of this role.

Continuous Improvement & Reporting

- Throughout the year the PSC Chair will maintain a log of issues and ideas pertaining to: (a) potential feedback to units that might clarify or improve future sabbatical or RPT submissions, and (b) ideas for improvement of PSC functioning, both intended to encourage continuous improvement. At the end of the academic term the PSC will discuss which issues warrant inclusion in the PSC's year-end report.
- At the end of the spring semester, the PSC Chair will prepare a summary report to be submitted to the Faculty Senate and the Office of the Provost describing the work of the committee during the academic terms and key issues and ideas related to ongoing improvement.
- At least once annually, before May 15th of each academic term the PSC should review its operating procedures, propose specific changes if needed, and submit to the Senate Executive Council for review and approval.