

Tips for Preparing for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Review

Each spring semester, the Office of the Provost will sponsor panel discussions offering tips on ways to prepare for RPT review. Panelists include individuals who have served on various RPT review committees at the department, college, and University levels, and individuals recently promoted to the ranks of Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor. The following tips have been gathered from advice offered by panelists.

Detailed forms and procedures for the RPT process can be accessed through the [Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs website](#). Additionally, Article 14 of the [Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\)](#) between the UVM Administration and United Academics provides extensive guidelines and information relevant to those faculty who are in the full time bargaining unit.

Questions or concerns? Please contact Jane Okech, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (Jane.Okech@uvm.edu).

ORGANIZING AND ALLOCATING YOUR TIME PRE-REVIEW

1. With the exception of faculty whose primary appointment is in the Larner College of Medicine or in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, College and Department RPT Faculty Evaluation Guidelines (RPT guidelines) and Annual Performance Review Guidelines (also referred to as AEG, Annual Evaluation Guidelines) are required for each department/unit in the [CBA](#) (14.4). They constitute the standards by which faculty covered by the bargaining unit should be evaluated. If you are covered by the bargaining unit, familiarize yourself with your department/unit guidelines right away and revisit them annually. You should also be familiar with your unit's [Scholarly Productivity and Impact Metrics](#).
2. Be strategic - if your workload plan includes research, organize your career like a project manager. Identify what you hope or need to complete, and the dates for doing so. Then plan backwards in order to create a timeline for yourself (dates for submitting particular manuscripts and/or grant proposals, curriculum projects, etc.). You may find you need to postpone certain time-insensitive projects that are unlikely to have short term pay-offs.
3. Establish a strong relationship with your Chair, Dean, mentor, and other colleagues and supervisors and get their perspectives on what is important to do to attain your RPT goals.
4. It is your responsibility to make sure you are paying attention to the RPT cycle and your place in it. Though the administration should let you know with ample time when your RPT materials are due, that doesn't always happen. Some faculty in recent years were not informed until the last minute and were not paying attention to the RPT cycle which resulted in hasty preparation of materials at busy times in a semester.
5. Tenure track faculty should begin early on to identify individuals who can subsequently be invited to serve as external reviewers for research/scholarship (for the tenure review). The [Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs website](#) and the [CBA](#) include descriptions of who qualifies as an "arm's length" reviewer (this individual should not have a "significant personal relationship" with the candidate, such as a good friend, former teacher or student or collaborator, but can have a professional relationship.) Thus, when you attend professional conferences seek out and familiarize others with your work, including those who are highly regarded in your field and might serve ultimately as reviewers of your research and scholarship.
6. Carefully construct your annual review materials each year and use them as the foundation for a cumulative record for your RPT reviews. Emphasize in your annual review materials the RPT criteria for your department/unit and how you are meeting the guidelines. Carefully consider and address the feedback you receive during your annual and reappointment reviews. Take the opportunity during the formal meeting with your evaluator to discuss your trajectory and future plans.

PREPARING YOUR RPT DOSSIER

The [Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs website](#) includes links to RPT guidelines and forms. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the resources that are available.

1. With the exception of faculty whose primary appointment is in the Larner College of Medicine or in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, College and Department RPT Guidelines are mandated by the [CBA](#), approved by the Dean, the Provost, and reviewed by the department/unit every five years. These guidelines constitute the standards by which represented faculty will be evaluated (see Article 14 of the [CBA](#), and feel free to contact your UA representative or UA's Contract Administrative Committee at contract@unitedacademics.org if you have any questions). Therefore, when you write your portion of your RPT dossier, **systematically and directly link your statements and evidence to your unit's RPT Guidelines and, as appropriate, the AEGs and the [Scholarly Productivity and Impact Metrics](#):**
 - a. Use the organization and numbering system of the RPT Guidelines to organize your own narrative.
 - b. Quote or provide an explicit description of the key criteria of the RPT Guidelines to introduce or provide a context for your statements; be clear about what the RPT Guidelines say about expectations for your positions, in particular. Include a clear statement of the standards in your field and your workload, including the hours required for particular commitments (e.g., clinical instruction, internship advising, etc.).

- c. Provide specific evidence in a step-by-step fashion to document how you have met each RPT guideline; remember it is YOUR responsibility to provide the specific evidence of how you have met each relevant guideline.
 - d. Do not be bashful about stating your case as positively as the evidence warrants. On the other hand, don't overstate your record. Remember, you should be creating an evidence-based document that speaks clearly, accurately, and directly to the standards.
 - e. Do not compare yourself with other colleagues, but rather, compare yourself directly with the standards of the RPT Guidelines.
2. Think of your RPT narrative as a "**persuasive document**" - your job is to **tell a story** about yourself that **persuades** the various reviewers that you have met the requirements for reappointment, promotion, or tenure (as relevant) by providing strong, convincing evidence documenting each requirement laid out in the guideline. Thoroughly review your document as you would a scholarly publication. This may involve **taking the initiative yourself to collect data** that your unit does not regularly collect (e.g., advising feedback, information regarding your publication outlets, peer teaching observations/evaluations, workshop evaluations, etc.). You may also need to **explain the meaning of certain practices and conventions** in your field (e.g., sequence of authorship, roles on funded projects, responsibilities in clinical instruction, full names and stature of scholarly funding sources). Clearly explain your role and responsibilities in your various activities (e.g., on manuscripts, funding applications, scholarly projects, co-teaching, advising, etc.).
 3. Ask colleagues (in and outside your department) who have recently gone through the review process to share their RPT dossiers. They may be valuable models.
 4. The College and University review committees have a large number of faculty dossiers to review. Therefore, be **complete** but be as **concise and clear** as you can. Over-writing can obscure important information. And remember to organize and reference your dossier using your unit's RPT evaluation guidelines.
 5. **Approach the writing process as a writing instructor would suggest:**
 - a. **Start early**; don't put off drafting your dossier. It typically takes much more time than anticipated to carefully and systematically gather, integrate, and organize your material into a coherent but concise document.
 - b. Plan on writing **multiple drafts**, working toward an increasingly clear, concise, comprehensive, and compelling argument.
 - c. Ask **colleagues** to review and provide **feedback** on your draft(s). Be sure to include at least one colleague from **OUTSIDE** your department/unit, who is not closely familiar with your work (because most of the reviewers will be outside your discipline).
 - d. Be very conscientious about your **final editing process** to achieve clear organization and wording, a succinct presentation, and a neat document (ask colleagues who review your drafts to comment on ALL aspects of your document, including minor editing issues).
 6. Be sure to explain any irregularities or shortcomings in your materials (e.g., lack of teaching evaluations, an irregular scholarly record, etc.). Do not avoid addressing these issues with hope that no one will notice they exist. Be clear and present whatever evidence you have for why these irregularities should not be an obstacle for your RPT decision.
 7. Do not rely on your Chair to assure that your dossier is organized and complete. Take active responsibility for assuring your materials are of high quality and timely. In other words, do not assume that someone else will make the case for you; assume that you need to provide the required evidence yourself. Make sure you review your dossier carefully before it is made available to your department for review. Once a dossier is open to the department, it is "closed," which means that no additional materials may be added and nothing may be removed as it progresses through various levels of review except in the case that you wish to add a rebuttal to the chair's or dean's statement and in cases when additional materials become available (**Article 14.5.f.vi of the [CBA](#)**).

ADDITIONS AND REBUTTALS

1. Familiarize yourself with the [Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs website](#) that details procedures and timelines. The [CBA](#) provides information regarding letters of rebuttal and supporting documentation, including timelines that *must* be adhered to by the candidate. Review committees take these letters from the candidate very seriously and do not look negatively on those who rebut. So don't hesitate to communicate if you believe there are errors, omissions, or confusions in your record (e.g., in the materials that your Chair has submitted). Also, do not hesitate to ask for feedback if you choose to write a rebuttal either from a trusted colleague or from UA's Contract Administrative Committee (contract@unitedacademics.org).
2. **You cannot file a grievance until the Provost has issued a decision** because all votes and recommendations prior to that decision are simply advisory. Therefore, keep careful notes regarding any concerns you have along the way so that you'll have documentation available if needed at a later point. See Article 14.9 of the [CBA](#) for more information about the grounds on which the Provost's decision could be grieved.