

Frequently Asked Questions about the RTP Proposal for a University Tenure Committee

What is the advantage of a University Tenure Committee at JCU?	2
Aren't departments adequate in providing such balance?	2
Is having a UTC going to mean more work for the department's tenure committee?	2
Is having a UTC going to mean more work for the candidate?	2
Just to be clear about this, won't the candidate have to prepare a dossier that explains the candidate's work to faculty from other disciplines?.....	2
But faculty members get tenure from a department, don't they? Why do faculty outside the department need to review a candidate's dossier?	2
Do any other colleges and universities have University Tenure Committees?	2
What have members of the RTP heard from faculty at schools that have UTCs?	2
What is meant by a "substantive review" of the tenure dossier?	3
Will JCU faculty on the UTC be able to undertake a substantive review of candidates for tenure from a discipline other than their own?.....	3
How about the time involved for faculty on the UTC?	3
The UTC reviewing a candidate at the time of the tenure decision will most likely be different to the UTC reviewing the candidate at the mid-term review. Isn't this unfair to the tenure candidate?	3
If the UTC is intended to ensure that all tenure candidates are treated fairly, what does it do that is not already done by the Grievance Committee?.....	3
How are UTC members elected?	3
If a faculty member is currently on a tenure-track appointment, would a tenure decision go through the University Tenure Committee, if this proposal were approved?	3
If approved, how would this proposal affect a Visiting Assistant Professor?.....	4
If approved, how would this proposal affect the composition of COAD?	4
If this proposal were approved, would the dossier for future candidates seeking tenure require outside reviewers?.....	4

What is the advantage of a University Tenure Committee at JCU?

The UTC provides faculty input into a tenure decision to balance the input from the deans on the dossier that goes to the AVP.

As an added benefit the UTC might foster understanding between different disciplines and give JCU faculty a better understanding of each other's work. It could foster common expectations of publication, teaching, and service, enhancing collegiality.

Aren't departments adequate in providing such balance?

The UTC is an additional level of faculty-only input that tips the balance of tenure evaluation more in the favor of the faculty.

Is having a UTC going to mean more work for the department's tenure committee?

No. There is no extra work of any kind involved for the department's tenure committee.

Is having a UTC going to mean more work for the candidate?

No. The same dossier prepared by the candidate for the department and COAD will go to the UTC.

Just to be clear about this, won't the candidate have to prepare a dossier that explains the candidate's work to faculty from other disciplines?

No. The deans already expect a dossier that clearly explains the candidate's research and teaching to a non-expert.

But faculty members get tenure from a department, don't they? Why do faculty outside the department need to review a candidate's dossier?

Actually, faculty members get tenure from the university, as described in the Faculty Handbook, so it is appropriate that a University Tenure Committee review a candidate's dossier.

Do any other colleges and universities have University Tenure Committees?

Yes, many do. In the document *Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation*¹ a "campus-wide tenure committee" is listed as one of the normal participants in the tenure review process. The RTP has presented this proposal because we believe it represents the best in faculty governance and can help JCU achieve the goals for tenure evaluation outlined in the AAUP document.

The RTP has solicited information regarding the tenure review process at the other Jesuit colleges and universities and the replies we have received so far are tabulated at the end of this FAQ.

What have members of the RTP heard from faculty at schools that have UTCs?

The anecdotal evidence we have heard has been predominantly in favor of a UTC. For example, we have heard that a UTC can help insulate tenure candidates from extra-professional factors such as departmental politics, personality conflicts, and disputes within a discipline. On the other hand, we have heard that at some universities tenure candidates feel obliged to cultivate the good will of powerful UTC members. The UTC structure proposed by the RTP eliminates this possibility because the

¹ *Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation* A Joint Project of the American Council on Education, The American Association of University Professors, and the United Educators Insurance Risk Retention Group
<http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/tenure-evaluation.pdf>

UTC members are chosen by lot from an elected pool and members of the pool are only elected for three year terms.

What is meant by a “substantive review” of the tenure dossier?

A substantive review is an independent assessment as to whether the tenure dossier demonstrates that the candidate has met the department standards. Thus, the UTC would not be limited to a procedural review.

Will JCU faculty on the UTC be able to undertake a substantive review of candidates for tenure from a discipline other than their own?

Review by faculty who are not experts in the discipline under review is already part of the tenure review process at JCU. Neither the COAD nor tenure committees of departments that involve more than one discipline limit themselves to procedural review. When department standards are clear, the faculty at JCU is capable of making fair, informed decisions, as do our peers at the many other institutions that have UTCs.

How about the time involved for faculty on the UTC?

Yes, serving on the UTC would be a significant time commitment yet our colleagues serving on UTCs at other institutions consider it a privilege. Further, it is the opinion and experience of the RTP that the JCU faculty is willing to invest time in meaningful work and shared governance to support our colleagues and the University. The proposed UTC structure ensures that the workload for the UTC is manageable.

The UTC reviewing a candidate at the time of the tenure decision will most likely be different to the UTC reviewing the candidate at the mid-term review. Isn't this unfair to the tenure candidate?

Fairness and consistency in the tenure review process cannot rely on continuity in the membership of the tenure review committee because committees can and do change. In the current system, for example, department committees and the COAD have changed in the past and may well change in the future during a candidate's probationary period. This would also apply to the UTC if the proposal were approved. Fairness and consistency can only be ensured by clear standards and procedures.

If the UTC is intended to ensure that all tenure candidates are treated fairly, what does it do that is not already done by the Grievance Committee?

The UTC should help to ensure that grievance committees are only used as a measure of last resort. As a level of review before the tenure decision is made by the AVP, a UTC should increase clarity in tenure deliberations so that difficult cases are resolved fairly during the tenure process, not in a grievance. In other words, UTC oversight ought to catch a lot of the problems that currently end up as grievances and that's better for everyone.

How are UTC members elected?

Each year five faculty, one from each division of the faculty, will be elected by their division for a three year term in the pool. No department may have more than two members in the UTC pool.

If a faculty member is currently on a tenure-track appointment, would a tenure decision go through the University Tenure Committee, if this proposal were approved?

No. Faculty members currently on the tenure track are grandfathered into the system of tenure in place when they were hired.

If approved, how would this proposal affect a Visiting Assistant Professor?

This proposal is only relevant to the tenure review process. It is not relevant to faculty who have visiting appointments and who do not undergo tenure review.

If the proposal were approved it will apply to faculty hired into a tenure track appointment after the changes are incorporated into the faculty handbook.

If approved, how would this proposal affect the composition of COAD?

This proposal makes no change in the composition of COAD.

If this proposal were approved, would the dossier for future candidates seeking tenure require outside reviewers?

No. This proposal makes no requirements or recommendations for the content or format of the tenure dossier.

APPENDIX

Tenure Review at other Jesuit colleges and universities

The RTP solicited information about the tenure review process at other Jesuit Universities. This table summarizes the responses we received up to September 15, 2012. Department, College and University means a Department, College or University Committee.

University	Levels
Seattle U	Department – College/School – Dean – University – Provost-President
Spring Hill	Academic Division – University - President
Loyola Maryland	Department – Dean – VPAA – Board – President in parallel: Department – University – VPAA
U of San Francisco	Dean – College – University – AVP The tenure candidate can ask the department to review the tenure dossier and write a recommendation to the Dean.
Georgetown	Department – University – AVP - President
Creighton	Department – College – Dean – University – President
Fairfield	Department – Dean – University – SVPAA - President
Boston	Department/School – Dean – President Provost attends the schools P&T meetings and votes in the case of a tie.
Xavier	Department – Dean – University – President – Board
Le Moyne	Department – Dean – University – Provost – President
St Josephs	Department – Dean – University - President
Holy Cross	Department – Dean – University – Board + President
Loyola, New Orleans	Department – College – Dean – Provost – President A University Committee acts as an appeals board