

College of Science

Procedures for Periodic Review of Department Heads

VT Policy 6100 sets broad parameters for comprehensive, periodic review of department heads and chairs. Key points are:

- A review of the department head/chair (DH) is conducted in the final year of her/his term.
- The review committee is selected by the dean with majority of selections from among those recommended by the department.
- The review should help both the DH and the department develop and improve.
- The review committee reports to the dean. The dean communicates results to the DH and then the department.

This document provides implementation details for review of department heads and chairs within the College of Science. The College aims for each review to be informative without being overly burdensome. While Policy 6100 says that “the review should take no longer than four months from inception to final report,” COS recommends no more than two months, within which one month is allocated to gathering input from relevant constituencies.

Constituencies

The review will gather information from these constituencies:

1. *Regular Faculty*: departmental tenured faculty, tenure-track faculty, and all *regular* (not on restricted appointments) non-tenure-track instructional and research faculty;
2. *Other Faculty*: faculty on restricted appointments (eg. adjuncts, post-docs, research associates, instructors on restricted appointments) and any faculty without instructional or research duties (eg. some AP faculty);
3. *Departmental Staff*;
4. *Students*.

Input from these four constituencies should be separated and clearly identified in the report, taking care to preserve confidentiality. Methods of information gathering may include (i) one to two faculty meetings (without the DH), (ii) meetings of the review committee with constituency groups, and/or individuals within those groups (recommended for Other Faculty, for Departmental Staff, and for Students), and (iii) (*required*) anonymous survey of all Regular Faculty. If deemed appropriate by the review committee, input may also be gathered from relevant individuals external to the department.

Only the survey of Regular Faculty is required; it is otherwise up to the review committee to determine what information gathering methods are used. Further details for the survey are provided in a later section of this document. A concerted effort should be made to include all members of constituency groups 1, 2 and 3. The review committee should exercise its judgment in determining an appropriate number of students to be contacted and in what manner.

The Review Committee

Review committee composition is discussed in Policy 6100. Within that policy, departments are given wide latitude in how recommendations for committee membership are determined, though final selection is the Dean's.

The review committee is charged with completing the review in a timely fashion, with being thorough in reporting information gathered in the review, and with making a concerted effort to achieve a Regular Faculty survey response rate in excess of 50%. The review committee keeps confidential all information that it gathers. The review committee reports to the Dean, not to the department or the DH.

The Survey of Regular Faculty

The survey of Regular Faculty will consist of the following ten standard questions in addition to at most ten custom questions the committee deems appropriate. Responses to these up to twenty questions will be on a 5-point likert scale (1=poor,...,5=excellent); each question also open for comments. The report to the dean should include the response distribution and mean for each question, and all submitted comments.

- Rate the Department Head's effectiveness in developing and communicating a shared vision for the department
- Rate the Department Head's accessibility
- Rate the Department Head's willingness to seek and incorporate faculty input
- Rate the Department Head's effectiveness in working with the College administration
- Rate the Department Head's performance in advancing the Department's status in the broader academic community
- Rate the Department Head's effectiveness in managing and delegating administrative tasks within the department
- Rate the Department Head's effectiveness in creating/maintaining a good working environment
- Rate the degree to which departmental resources are appropriately and equitably distributed
- Rate the Department Head's effectiveness in evaluating quality of faculty member contributions
- Your overall rating of the Department Head

The survey will end with this request for general comments: Please add any additional comments that would be helpful. For instance, what are the DH's particular strengths? What suggestions, if any, do you have for improvement?

In addition to the above, one demographic question will ordinarily be included, to identify if a respondent is (i) tenured/tenure-track or (ii) not (i.e. they are research-track faculty, professors of practice, regular instructors, etc). However, out of concern for confidentiality, this question is not to be included if the latter group consists of fewer than five individuals. When included, the response distribution and mean for each question should be reported separately for each of the two groups.

Scheduling the Review

The procedures in this document are to be followed in the final year of a DH appointment, preferably in the fall semester of that year. The DH review precedes any internal departmental process related to DH reappointment or the possibility thereof. Policy 6100 also allows that a comprehensive review “may be initiated at any time by the dean and/or at the request of at least one-third of the tenure-track faculty in the department.” In such cases, these same procedures are to be followed, with review to begin within one month of a faculty request.

It is the College’s responsibility to notify the DH that a review is needed; it is the DH’s responsibility to notify his/her department of the review and to have them initiate departmental procedures for recommending review committee members to the Dean. Once the recommendations have been made, the Dean will appoint the committee and gather it for a charge meeting. The charge meeting allows for discussion of the scope of the review as well as evaluation procedures. The charge meeting also provides for election of a review committee chair from among the departmental members of the committee.

The review committee is asked to provide its report to the Dean within two months of the charge meeting. If this will not be possible, the review committee should notify the Dean as soon as this becomes known, providing an anticipated report date. Communication between the Dean and the review committee will customarily be handled through the committee chair. The Dean, at his/her discretion, may appoint an Assistant or Associate Dean as the committee chair’s primary contact with College administration.

At the time that department heads are notified of the need for a review, the College will also provide a list of those departments needing DH reviews to the president of COSFA. This is for informational purposes.

The Review Committee’s Report

The review committee provides a written report to the Dean, documenting and summarizing their findings. The report is to include sections corresponding to each of the constituencies identified earlier. The information gathering methods employed should be briefly described. Every effort must be taken to maintain confidentiality of each and every respondent. The survey statistics as requested above, as well as any written comments gathered through the required survey of Regular Faculty, are to be included. The review committee’s report is submitted only to the Dean, not to the department or the DH.

The Dean will meet with the review committee to go over the report, if so requested by the committee. The Dean and the chair of the review committee will meet with the DH to present and discuss results and answer any questions the DH may have. The Dean will then provide a written synopsis to the department, and will meet with the department to discuss the review team’s findings. This meeting should take place within one month of the committee’s report to the Dean.