**SAMPLE DOCUMENT #21**

University RPT Standards Committee

**URPTSC Approval Process Overview**

 (Rev. 2010-10-20)

Steps for review & approval of changes to a departmental RPT Statement.

**I. Introduction.**

 A. Under U-Policies 6-303 & 6-305 the URPTSC has the final role in approval of departmental (or college-wide) RPT Statements (and a changed RPT Statement can be put into effect only after that approval).

 B. Ordinarily a request for review & approval is initiated by the department, but per 6-305, a review can also be initiated by the URPTSC itself (or by vice president, dean, UPTAC, Graduate Council, individual faculty). The URPTSC is considering establishing a fixed schedule of periodic reviews, possibly linked with the existing 7-year academic unit review cycle (commonly known as grad/undergrad council reviews).

 C. The URPTSC offers **two levels of review**—a *thorough* review of an entire Statement, or, (beginning in 2010) an *expedited* review of discrete changes.

1. In most instances, the URPTSC conducts a *thorough review of the entire Statement* (not limited to specific portions the department is seeking to change), involving intensive review by an assigned team of Committee members and the assistance of the office of the Associate VP as ex officio, culminating with final review and approval by the overall Committee.

2. If the department seeks to make only a small number of discrete changes clearly consistent with U-Policy an *expedited approval of the discrete changes* may be offered (see below).

 D. **Contacts between URPTSC and departments---through VP’s office.** The Associate V.P. for Faculty—Academic Affairs is ex officio to and provides technical assistance and other support for the URPTSC, including serving as the relay point between the URPTSC and departments (and deans) when requested by the URPTSC Chair. Currently, this role is conducted by Bob Flores, Professor of Law, as special assistant to Assoc. V.P. Susan Olson. floresr@law.utah.edu 581-5881.

**II. Typical *thorough* review process.**

 **A. Principles of thorough review.** The URPTSC takes its role very seriously, employing a rigorous review process, ensuring that RPT Statements, by the time of final approval, provide thorough and accurate descriptions of the criteria and standards and the procedures for RPT decisions, in full accord with applicable University Regulations, and are written with adequate clarity to meet the needs both of the department’s internal personnel (particularly the RPT candidates) and the various University administrators and committees involved in RPT decision-making (including any appeals). Such a rigorous review approach can be protracted---less so if the submitting department has itself thoroughly reviewed and appropriately revised its initial draft before submitting it, and then responds quickly and effectively to URPTSC feedback for subsequent drafts—and more protracted if the initial draft is of poor quality and the department moves slowly on improved drafts.

 **B. Steps.**

**1. Careful preparation of initial draft—by department.** The department should begin its drafting by examining the relevant *current University Regulations* (primarily Policies 6-303 and 6-311). Many older Statements have not been kept up to date with various important changes made to those policies in recent years. The URPTSC makes available to departments its *“checklist”* that is used in the review process and can serve as guidance for drafting. *Examples of well-crafted Statements* of other departments may also be considered. With those resources for guidance, the department should carefully examine and revise the draft to be submitted. The submitted draft should document the specific changes proposed as compared to the previously approved Statement (ordinarily done using text marking—strikeout & underlining), and drafts should be submitted digitally, as MS Word files (and the Word “track changes” tool may be used for marking changes). If there are significant changes not self-explanatory, the rationale for them should be explained in an accompanying brief memo, addressed to the URPTSC. The submitted proposed draft should have been preliminarily approved by the department regular faculty and dean (per 6-303), and the dean may add additional explanation when forwarding a proposed draft on to the URPTSC.

(Resources for drafting: See IV below.)

[Use of ‘template’--- currently under consideration—check with URPTSC Chair/ Assoc. V.P. for update.]

**2. Review of initial draft—by URPTSC.**

The approach to reviewing the initial draft will depend on the quality of that draft. If the initial draft is well-organized, and its description of procedures is both thorough and mostly consistent with U-Policies, then it will be reviewed in a single phase, with both the Associate V.P.’s office and a team of assigned URPTSC members reviewing it simultaneously. The Associate V.P.’s office will focus primarily on document structure and the description of procedures, and the URPTSC members will focus primarily on the substantive criteria and standards. That feedback will be returned to the department (copied to the dean), and the department will prepare a second draft.

If the initial draft is either not well-organized or has a problematic description of procedures, then the review will occur in two phases.

In the *first phase*, there will be a preliminary review, to develop feedback focusing primarily on the need for document *reorganizing* and/or the need for correcting deficiencies in the description of RPT *procedures*. The URPTSC Chair and the Associate V.P.’s office will determine the assignment of a team for this first phase review (in some instances conducted by the Associate V. P.’s office).

 Commentary is typically given through a combination of i) a cover memo, and ii) specific comments inserted within the draft. The feedback regarding organization & procedures will be returned to the department (cc’d to dean), and the department will prepare another draft, rectifying the serious problems of document organization and/or deficient description of procedures--- resulting in a draft that is ready to be presented to the URPTSC for a *second phase* review focusing on the core matters of substance—criteria and standards for RPT decisions.

**3. Second draft submitted--by department** (after dean’s approval of any significant changes). Include explanation of changes made—including explanation of responses to all major points raised in the feedback given on the initial draft.

 (If this draft responds effectively to the initial feedback, the subsequent review steps may occur quickly.)

**4. Second draft—assigned to review team.** A team is assigned by the URPTSC Chair (typically two or three members) once the draft is submitted. Reviewers, using URPTSC Checklist, and after first examining the initial feedback materials, consider i) whether 2nd draft effectively addresses the document structure/clarity issues and RPT procedures issues raised previously, ii) whether description of substantive criteria and standards is sufficiently clear and consistent with Policy 6-303 (particularly on excellence standards for tenure), and iii) any other matters affecting the overall quality of the Statement.

**5. Additional drafts---if needed.**

Depending on the quality of the 2nd draft, a third draft (and sometimes more) will be needed. For each round of drafting, the commentary of the URPTSC will be relayed to the department, and the department will be asked to respond, expeditiously.

**6. Final approval—formal documentation.** When the assigned review team and Chair determine that a suitable draft has been submitted, it is presented to the full Committee with a recommendation of voting for approval. In order to avoid any confusion about approval status and inappropriate use of an unapproved Statement (as has occasionally happened), the final approval will be formally documented through an approval memorandum from the URPTSC Chair to the department, that memorandum will be attached to the revised Statement, and the declared date of final approval will be displayed on the Statement.

Until final approval of a proposed revised Statement is declared—the department must continue to operate under the former version (the most recent version fully approved by the URPTSC).

Statements fully approved (beginning with 2010) are then published as Supplemental Rules in conjunction with Policy 6-303 (University Regulations Library website).

**7. Overall time line.** The overall time for completion of review and approval is primarily dependent on i) the quality of the initial draft, ii) the time the department takes in preparing subsequent drafts, and iii) the time taken for the reviews by the URPTSC and Associate V.P. (which is affected by the time of year that drafts are submitted, and by the overall workload of the URPTSC at that time—i.e., the number of departments undergoing review). Long delays between steps in the process are undesirable, particularly bridging across academic years (committee members rotate off, memories fade, and long delays rarely improve final quality), and so departments are strongly encouraged to attend promptly to redrafting.

**III. Expedited review.**

 Beginning in 2010, the URPTSC in appropriate cases may offer an expedited process for approval of specific discrete changes.

 A. Standards. A request for expedited approval will be considered only if the changes are i) few and discrete and ii) unequivocally consistent with U-Policy, and iii) the overall Statement is otherwise of high quality and fully consistent with current U-Policy. Examples of such discrete changes include a change of the probationary period (6 vs. 7 years), or a change of the number of mid-probationary formal reviews (1 vs. 2), both of which are explicitly given as options in U-Policy. Statements which have undergone a full review within fewer than five years are most likely to be sufficiently current and of sufficient overall quality--and older Statements are less likely to be appropriate for a limited-scope review. (This is not an avenue for avoiding a needed more comprehensive updating and thorough URPTSC review.) In appropriate cases, a determination may be made to give ‘provisional’ approval of such a discrete change pending anticipated completion of a more comprehensive revision and review process.

 B. Steps.

1. The department (with dean’s approval) submits a proposal/approval memo including i) description of the proposed discrete change, ii) description of the current practice sought to be changed, iii) proposed effective date of change and its duration, iv) policy for handling the individual cases of transitional candidates (whose probationary period began under old practice), v) date of approval vote by department regular faculty majority, vi) dated signatures of department representative (RPT Chair or Dept. Chair) & dean, and vii) signature lines for URPTSC Chair & cognizant Associate V.P.  *[Sample memo is available.]*

2. The Associate V.P. and URPTSC Chair jointly (delegated the authority of the full Committee) will review the proposal and determine the appropriateness of granting the expedited approval. If approved, the full URPTSC is notified of the expedited approval, and the department implements the discrete change as of the designated date. The signed proposal/ approval memo is attached as an addendum to the departmental RPT Statement (included with all copies of the Statement, particularly those distributed to RPT candidates and department committee members, and included in candidate files).

IV. References/Resources--- pertinent U-Policies and other useful resources.

Policies 6-303, 6-305, 6-311 at the U-Regs website <http://www.regulations.utah.edu> .

The URPTSC *Checklist*, and *examples of recently approved RPT Statements*, are available at the U-Regs website, with Policy 6-303—Part IV--Rules, Procedures, Guidelines, Forms and other related resources, http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-303.html.

*{From fall 2010 onward, newly approved Statements will be routinely added to the website, available for other departments to refer to as examples.}*