

Guidelines for the Composition of Voting Groups and Peer Groups - Academic Administrative Titles

Recommended for the following titles: Academic Administrators, Academic Coordinators

The University of California uses a system of self-governance. Thus, it follows that personnel actions related to academic employees should involve a review process made up of the peers of those being reviewed. Voting groups and peer groups are two of the most important parts of such a personnel system. The composition of each of these groups is a key element in the success of the review system, so general guidelines to assist in creating these groups are summarized below for people in Academic Federation (AF) titles that focus on administrative activities.

Voting Groups

Voting groups are the people designated to review and vote on personnel actions for a single candidate or a particular group of candidates. The composition of a voting group for an Academic Federation member within a department or unit should follow the general guidelines outlined here.

For all AF members in titles with a significant administrative responsibility, the basic voting group should include all unit members in the same AF title series. This is likely to be a small number of people, so additional members can be added. Other AF members of the unit in different administrative titles can be included. If desired, members of the unit in other, non-administrative titles can be included due to their familiarity with the candidate's program. The goal of this approach is to include as voting group members academics with the same disciplinary and functional (i.e., administrative) background as that of the candidate.

Peer Groups

Guidelines on Composition

The suggested general guidelines below are intended to provide a peer group that can offer an informed and sound review of both the function (i.e., administration and other activities) and the disciplinary content of the candidate's performance. The size and composition of the peer group is discussed below.

- Peer groups should consist of at least five people. Larger groups can be used. The size of the peer group should depend upon the nature of the job description for the candidate and the range of people involved with, or knowledgeable about, the candidate's performance. All academic members of the department or unit who perform administrative duties, and some people in the same title series from other units, could be included in the peer group to provide the most thorough review of both function and disciplinary content.

- Some members of the peer group should be selected for their knowledge of the functions being performed by the candidate. Individuals in the same title, or closely related titles, as the candidate would provide that functional expertise. These people may be from other related units.
- Some members of the peer group should be selected for their ability to offer feedback on the quality of the academic program being administered by the candidate. Individuals who have the same disciplinary background as the candidate would provide that disciplinary expertise.
- All other peer group members should be knowledgeable of the candidate's productivity as reported in the dossier.

Examples of Peer Groups

Below are some examples of peer groups for Academic Federation members in any of the administrative titles listed above. These examples represent peer groups that would be acceptable under the guidelines above, but this list of examples is NOT exhaustive of acceptable arrangements.

For a person affiliated with an academic department: (1) The peer group could include all the department's members in the same title. (2) The peer group could include all the department's members in any of the administrative titles. (3) The peer group could include some members in the Professorial series (e.g. those with disciplinary backgrounds similar to the candidate's), all the department's Academic Federation members in the same title, and some of the department's Academic Federation members in any of the other administrative titles. (4) The peer group could include one member in the Professorial series, all the department's Academic Federation members in the same title, and possibly some Academic Federation members in any of the other administrative titles that are in the department and/or other units.

For a person not affiliated with an academic department: (1) The peer group could include all the unit's members in the same title. (2) The peer group could include all the unit's members in any of the administrative titles. (3) The peer group could include some members in the Professorial series from any unit (e.g. people with disciplinary backgrounds similar to the candidate's), all the unit's Academic Federation members in the same title, and some of the unit's Academic Federation members in any of the other administrative titles. (4) The peer group could include one member in the Professorial series, all Academic Federation members in the same title within that unit, and possibly some Academic Federation members in the same title from other units.

Some Suggestions for Implementation

- The candidate should be allowed to present a list of potential peer group members to her/his supervisor. The supervisor will pick at least one person from that list and can pick the entire peer group from that list, if desired. The supervisor can also pick anyone else to serve on the peer group, within the general context of the guidelines here.

- Members of the peer group must comment on each evaluation criteria listed in the appropriate APM section for the candidate's title series, plus the individual's job description. Also, the unit may decide in advance to ask each peer group member to cast a vote on the entire case indicating whether or not he/she supports the proposed personnel action.
- The candidate's immediate supervisor should identify the peer group members and include a summary of supportive and critical comments from the peer group in the material provided to the voting group.
- The candidate's immediate supervisor can include details of the peer group membership and its vote in the department/unit letter, if desired. Also, supportive and critical comments from the peer group could be used in the letter to provide feedback to the candidate and explanation to campus reviewers of the case.

If you have questions regarding the details of this process, contact Jo-Anne Boorkman, Academic Assistant to the Vice Provost – Academic Affairs, at 2-4827 or jaboorkman@ucdavis.edu.