Steps for review and 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 and 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 has developed a prioritization system for initiating such reviews: highest priority for cases in which a department appears to have begun making use of an RPT Statement that has been revised but not finally approved by the URPTSC for implementation, and next highest priority for Statements which appear not to have been updated in longer than seven years. The seven year period is based on the cycle the University has long applied for conducting thorough program and structural reviews of all academic departments (required by the State Board of Regents, and carried out through the U’s Graduate and Undergraduate Councils). It is also based on the fact that University Policies governing RPT matters have undergone very significant revisions in recent years—and any departmental RPT Statement not recently updated is likely to be inconsistent with the current University Policies.
   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 VP 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 the office of Academic Affairs—Associate VP Amy Wildermuth.  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 substantive criteria, standards, evidence, and the departmental 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 department has itself thoroughly reviewed and appropriately revised its initial draft before URPTSC review begins, 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 are provided and should be considered. With those resources for guidance, the department should carefully examine and revise the draft to be reviewed. The draft to be reviewed should document the specific changes proposed as compared to the previously fully-approved Statement (ordinarily done using text marking—strikeout and 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 proposed draft submitted for URPTSC review should have been preliminarily approved by the department regular faculty, and the dean (per 6-303), and the dean may add additional explanation when forwarding a proposed draft on to the URPTSC. For departments in health sciences, approval of the VP Health Sciences is also a requirement. (Resources for drafting: See IV below.)

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 VP’s office and a team of assigned URPTSC members reviewing it simultaneously. The Associate VP’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 then prepare a second draft.

If the initial draft is either not well-organized or has a problematic description of procedures, then the review will likely occur in two phases. In the first phase, there will be a preliminary review, to develop feedback focusing primarily on the need for major reorganizing of the document and/or the need for correcting deficiencies in the description of RPT procedures. The URPTSC Chair and the Associate VP’s office will determine the assignment of a team for this first phase review (in some instances conducted by the Associate VP’s office).

Commentary is typically given through a combination of (i) a cover memo, and (ii) specific comments (and often, suggested rephrasing) inserted within the draft. The feedback
regarding organization and 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,
standards, and evidence 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 the URPTSC
Checklist, and after first examining the initial feedback materials, consider (i) whether the 2nd
draft effectively addresses the document structure/clarity issues and RPT procedures issues
raised previously, (ii) whether the descriptions of substantive criteria, standards, and evidence
are 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 (copied to dean), and the department will be asked to respond, expeditiously.

6. Final approval— formal documentation. A revised Statement is fully approved
when it has been approved by (i) a majority of the tenure-line faculty of the adopting department
(or entire college in the case of a college-wide Statement), (ii) the dean of the college, and (iii)
the URPTSC. Statements of health sciences departments also require approval of the Health
Sciences VP. For the final step, URPTSC approval, 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 permanently attached to the approved revised
Statement, and the declared date of final approval and date for implementation 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), which are of sufficiently high quality
to serve as useful models, are then published for University-wide access, including publication as
Supplemental Rules in conjunction with Policy 6-303 (on the University Regulations Library
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 VP (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 began offering 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) and dean, and (vii) signature lines for URPTSC Chair and cognizant Associate VP [Sample memo is available.]

2. The Associate VP and URPTSC Chair jointly (with delegated 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 a permanent 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, alongside 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 of high quality will be routinely added to the website, available for other departments to refer to as examples.}