

RTP Policy Committee Report to Faculty Senate

To:	Faculty Senate
From:	RTP Policy Committee
Date:	March 24, 2026
Subject:	RTP P&G Report

The RTP Policy Committee submits this report to summarize its Fall 2025/Spring 2026 review of the EPRT process. This review drew on information collected from several stakeholders, including department chairs and RTP committee members, prepared through the committee's benchmarking work. Taken together, these discussions suggest broad agreement that the current EPRT process warrants further refinement to ensure that it is fair, consistent, and developmental.

A central concern raised throughout the committee's review was that the present EPRT model is overly complex and, in practice, often burdensome for both departments and individual faculty. Committee members noted recurring difficulties with reviewer selection, scheduling, paperwork, and the consistency of implementation across units. The current process, particularly where it relies on multiple observations and multiple reviewers, can be difficult to administer in smaller departments with limited faculty capacity, specialized teaching assignments, or heavy instructional loads. At the same time, members emphasized that peer review should remain a meaningful component of faculty evaluation and support, rather than becoming a purely procedural exercise.

The committee also discussed the fundamental purpose of peer review. There was strong support for preserving peer observation as a mechanism not only for evaluation, but also for mentorship and faculty development. Members repeatedly returned to the view that peer review should help faculty improve teaching through actionable feedback, collegial discussion, and reflection. At present, however, the committee found that the formative and summative reviews of EPRT, including multiple reviewers, can be fairly convoluted. In some cases, the EPRT process generates substantial documentation without creating a clear path for faculty to respond to or build on developmental feedback. As a result, one important area of discussion has been how to make the process more intentionally developmental, especially during the tenure track years.

To support this work, the committee's subcommittee reviewed earlier Faculty Senate Red Committee materials from 2020, and is still examining peer-review policies at comparable and aspirational institutions, and is identifying common practices and possible directions. The benchmarking review showed that peer-review systems vary widely across institutions, yet some trends emerge. Many institutions distinguish more clearly between formative and summative review. Many also require fewer observations than APSU currently does. In many Universities, the early tenure-track years emphasize mentoring, structured pre and post-observation conversations, and developmental feedback. In contrast, later years rely on fewer, but more targeted, evaluations. These comparisons have helped the committee think more carefully about how APSU might reduce the burden of teaching evaluations for faculty while preserving rigor and support.

The committee's review also highlighted concerns about the reliability and consistency of the evaluators. While the use of multiple reviewers can be intended to strengthen fairness, committee members observed that consistency depends not only on the number of reviewers but also on the clarity of the instrument, the preparation of evaluators, and the suitability of the criteria across different teaching contexts. The current process does not yet provide sufficiently clear and uniform guidance for interpreting rubrics, evaluating different instructional modalities, or ensuring comparable expectations across departments. This issue is particularly important for faculty teaching in online, hybrid, clinical, laboratory, or other specialized environments, where a one-size-fits-all approach may not be adequate.

For this reason, the committee discussed the need for stronger standardization paired with appropriate flexibility. The committee agreed that if peer review of teaching is to function as a credible and constructive part of RTP, faculty should have greater confidence that evaluations are being conducted according to clear, understandable, and reasonably consistent standards.

Another theme in the committee's work was the relationship between feedback and improvement. Several peer institutions incorporate faculty reflection, structured debriefing, and follow-up conversations into their peer-review processes. By contrast, APSU's current system does not always create a formal opportunity for faculty to explain how they responded to formative feedback. The committee therefore discussed whether future revisions should include a reflective component, a documented response, or additional developmental support. Members also noted that optional consultation through CAFE might serve as a useful complement to formal peer review by separating developmental mentoring from evaluative judgment.

The RTP committee has not yet finalized recommendations for EPRT. Instead, it identified several issues for continued review in the spring 2026 and fall 2026 semesters. These include whether the current model can be further simplified, whether a single-reviewer approach may be preferable in some cases, what criteria should govern reviewer selection, and how best to adapt forms for different teaching settings. The committee also plans to examine post-tenure peer-review practices and to gather additional information from comparable institutions.

In sum, the committee's work to date suggests a broad consensus on several points. The current EPRT process is widely perceived as too complicated and burdensome. A revised system should be simpler, more transparent, more developmental, and more adaptable to varied teaching contexts. It should distinguish more clearly between formative and summative purposes, strengthen the usefulness of feedback, and improve consistency through clearer standards and training. The committee will continue its review and data collection from internal and external stakeholders and best practices in the evaluation of teaching and expects to return with more concrete recommendations in Spring 2027.