Explanation of the OSU Psychology Peer Review System  
(R. Petty, September, 2010)

I. PROCESS

The peer review committee consists of 4 Columbus faculty and 1 regional faculty member. Committee members are elected by the full faculty to represent different areas of expertise and they serve staggered two year terms. One of the department’s vice-chairs (appointed by the Chair) may serve in one of the elected spots to provide further continuity. For Columbus faculty, performance is rated in teaching, research and service. For regional faculty, performance is rated in research only. The Regional representative rates Columbus faculty only in research. The ratings are based on the information faculty submit in their Annual Activity Reports (AARs). The data in the AARs consist of three calendar years of information in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

The peer review committee has four meetings. The first meeting is to provide a general orientation to the task. Each of the other meetings is focused on one of the rating categories. Peer review committee members rate faculty performance individually and privately. Committee members are provided with summary statistics containing departmental means and medians for various activities such as publications, SEIs in courses, grants, and so forth to help establish norms. After making their ratings in each category (i.e., teaching, research, and service), the committee meets with the chair to examine the individual ratings. The focus of these meetings is on discussing discrepancies in the individual ratings (typically a divergence of 1 full rating point on the 5 point scale used). Sometimes committee members change their ratings based on the discussion but they need not do so. Following the meeting, the individual ratings are averaged to provide a score for each faculty member in each category. For Columbus faculty, the ratings in each category are combined into an overall rating with a weighting of 50% research, 30% teaching, and 20% service. On occasion, some faculty may have a different weighting scheme based on special circumstances (e.g., a higher proportion of time devoted to service). This overall rating serves as input to the chair for annual merit raises. For regional faculty, only ratings in research are provided for purposes of annual research feedback. Ratings are distributed before raise decisions are made so that faculty can respond to any concerns they have about their ratings by preparing a written statement to the chair and/or scheduling a face-to-face meeting. In cases where a faculty member believes that a serious error has been made in evaluating performance, a request can be made for the peer review committee to reconsider its ratings.

II. RATINGS

Teaching, research, and service are rated on a 1 to 5 scale, where a “3” indicates that the faculty member has the “expected” level of contribution in that area. In each case, “expected” refers to the performance that is expected of a faculty member at a Big 10 University (i.e., a major research university; a Top 20 psychology department). This criterion is obviously subjective and is likely to be influenced by the actual norms in our department in teaching, research, and service. A rating of 2 is “higher than expected” or “very good” and a rating of 1 is “outstanding.” A rating of 4 is “lower than expected” or “needs improvement,” and a rating of 5 is “poor” or “unsatisfactory.” In rating faculty, raters can assign scores in-between whole
categories (e.g., 2.75). When faculty examine their own ratings, the raw rating as well as the percentile are of interest. The raw rating tells faculty how the peer review committee views their performance with respect to expectations in each category. That is, a raw rating around 3 indicates that the faculty member is judged to be meeting expectations for a faculty member at a major research university. The percentile indicates where a faculty member’s performance falls with respect to other faculty in the department. It is entirely possible that a faculty member can be performing at an “expected” level in the department (i.e., a rating of 3), but get a percentile score that is either relatively low (e.g., 25th percentile) or high (75th percentile) depending on how other faculty in the department perform on that dimension. Columbus faculty and regional faculty are normed with respect to their own peers. Thus, the same raw score in research often translates into a different percentile rating for Columbus and regional campus faculty and the same raw score often translates into a different percentile in the research, teaching, and service categories.

III. CATEGORIES

In making ratings in each category, the peer review committee follows these general guidelines.

1. Research
Research is rated primarily for its quantity and quality, but other factors such as the programmatic nature of the work and authorship are also considered. Stated simply, the more high quality publications for which you are responsible over the review period, the higher your research rating should be. There are a few general guiding principals in making these assessments, however. First, although both quantity and quality are considered, quality tends to count more than quantity alone. That is, a few articles appearing in the most prestigious and visible outlets will lead to a higher rating than many articles appearing in journals of low quality and visibility. Quality of journals is assessed using information such as impact ratings, the department’s Top 10% list, and any explanation and documentation provided in a faculty member’s AAR. Second, publications in peer reviewed journals tend to count more than publications in books. There are exceptions, of course, because chapters appearing in important volumes will count more than articles appearing in low quality outlets. In judging publications, authorship factors are also weighed such as whether you are a leading or a peripheral collaborator, whether you are working with graduate students and postdocs in your lab, and so forth. Third, grants are highly valued by the department as they foster faculty research, support graduate students, and contribute to departmental infrastructure. However, the size (dollar amount) of grants is generally not considered since the cost of research in different areas varies dramatically. Also, having grants can enhance one’s research ratings, but the absence of grants per se should not detract from one’s ratings. In addition to publications and grants, citation counts are examined as a gross indication of the overall visibility of your program of research. Citation counts are not deemed as informative for junior faculty as they are for senior faculty. Finally, other indicators of high quality research are also considered such as research awards you have won during the review period. In general, to earn an “expected” rating in research, faculty should be producing about 6 good quality publications over the 3 year review period with a moderate number of citations. In fact, the median number of publications of the faculty has tended to hover around 6 over a three year period. However, the peer review committee should be aware of differential norms of publication within different substantive areas of psychology.
The fact that there are different norms of publication rates within different areas of psychology reinforces the view that *quality* of publications is the paramount criterion.

2. Teaching
Teaching is rated for its quantity, quality, and contribution to the department. The *quantity* of one’s formal teaching (i.e., number of courses offered) is evaluated in the context of one’s teaching load. Thus, if a faculty member is meeting his or her teaching obligation by teaching the assigned course load, this is sufficient to earn an “expected” rating with respect to quantity of formal teaching. Thus, faculty who have authorized lower course loads (e.g., due to sabbaticals, grant buy outs, contractual agreements, or any other legitimate reason, are not to be penalized). Other factors that contribute to assessments of the quantity of teaching include the number of honors, masters, and doctoral theses supervised during the review period. *Quality* of teaching is assessed by an examination of factors such as SEI scores in formal courses, the placement of graduate students, teaching award nominations and prizes for your instruction, and honors accorded your students (e.g., dissertation awards, etc.). *Contribution* of your teaching to the department considers factors such as whether you contribute to both undergraduate and graduate programs, the number of students you teach in classes, and whether the courses are those that are of critical importance to the department (e.g., required intermediate courses in your area; Psych 300, etc.). Development of new courses needed by the department is also considered. Quality of teaching contributes the most variance to the overall teaching rating. To earn an “expected” rating in teaching, faculty should be teaching their assigned teaching load, have an average number of students supervised, perform these duties at an average level of quality (e.g., at departmental norms), and have an average contribution to departmental goals.

3. Service
Service is examined in two major categories: local and national. The expectations for junior faculty in service are relatively low. Thus, serving on one departmental committee and doing some reviews for journals in your field would be sufficient to get a 3 (expected) rating. For tenured faculty, the expectation is higher. Thus, serving on a few local committees and doing some national service (e.g., more substantial journal and grant reviewing) could earn a 3. To earn a 2, at least one or the other categories of service (local or national) should be viewed as excellent. For excellent local service, faculty might chair an important committee and do significant other service in both the department and at the college or university level. For excellent national service faculty might serve on the editorial boards of several journals or serve as Editor or Associate Editor. Or, a faculty member might be on some important national committees, or serve in a high level elected office for a national Society. To achieve a rating of outstanding (“1”) in service, performance in either local or national service should be extraordinary with at least expected service in the other category, or service in both categories should be excellent.