

The Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) narratives are essential to your RTP portfolio. The four RTP narratives include the information statement or overview narrative, teaching narrative, scholarship/creative works narrative, and service narrative. While this handout provides general information about RTP narratives, follow department, college, and university guidelines as you write with your specific audience, purpose, and context in mind.

Purpose

While your portfolio provides evidence of your work and accomplishments, your narratives work together to explain the significance of your work and how your contributions qualify you for advancement. Additionally, RTP narratives provide a sense of cohesion and offer context and a lens for those reviewing your portfolio.

Content

When drafting the content of your RTP narratives, keep the following principles and strategies in mind:

Understand the Purpose of Each Narrative

Although your narratives may share common themes, each RTP narrative serves a unique purpose that will guide the content you include and your approach to writing.

- **The Information Statement or Overview Narrative** provides reviewers with a first impression of your portfolio. Consequently, this overarching narrative should clearly demonstrate how you qualify for advancement and introduce themes and evidence from your portfolio to support that claim.
- **The Teaching Narrative** shows how your development and experience with teaching qualify you for advancement. This may include intentional and responsive curriculum development, pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, and interactions with students. Provide enough context to address any limitations, demonstrate growth, and amplify achievements. Make sure to address your teaching over the evaluation period as a whole rather than focusing solely on a single class or semester.
- **The Scholarship/Creative Works Narrative** illustrates how your development and experience as a scholar qualify you for advancement. The narrative should also acknowledge how your scholarship/creative works have been of benefit in your classroom, department, college, university, and field or industry.
- **The Service Narrative** demonstrates how your development and experience with service qualify you for advancement. Outline how your service (serving on a committee, hosting a conference, peer reviewing scholarship, etc.) furthers your teaching and positively contributes to your department, college, university, and field or industry.

Write for Reviewers

Make it easy for reviewers to see how you have met RTP criteria by using clear examples and mirroring RTP language. Do not assume that all reviewers are familiar with your position within a program, your contribution on a committee, the importance of an achievement, the prestige of a publication, or the terminology and conventions of your discipline. Be clear and concise, knowing reviewers have multiple applications to evaluate.

Align Your Narrative with Local and Larger Contexts

Along with telling your story, show how your work supports the direction of your department, college, university, and field or industry. Since you work at a teaching institution, the significance and impact of your scholarship, service, and teaching should connect to furthering the work of learners and learning.

Focus on Analysis and Synthesis over Summary

Instead of simply summarizing your CV or portfolio, provide analysis, including the context, impact, and implications of your work. For example, if you participated in professional development, reference the experience, but focus on how it informed your approach to teaching and measurably impacted learners. As part of analysis, you may also address limitations and outline the overall trajectory for your work. In addition to providing analysis, synthesize the sum of your contributions and point out patterns and themes in your work.

Demonstrate Growth

Show your growth as a faculty member over the evaluation period, including illustrating your commitment to and consistency in learning and developing professionally. Make transfer, innovation, responsiveness, and adaptability visible. Explain how you stay informed in your work.

Make it Personal

Since your application will be reviewed alongside many others, emphasize your unique contributions, and make a compelling case for your advancement. Focus on your own work rather than relying on outside scholarship. Also, remember to use first-person point of view and personal pronouns such as “I” when writing about your work.

Keep it Professional

Keep your content professional by avoiding stances that are unnecessarily controversial, uncompromising, or critical of students, colleagues, and administrators. Avoid taking full credit for work others contributed to. Be strategic in selecting evidence that highlights you as a professional and a trustworthy university representative.

Structure

Intentional organization and formatting is vital to helping your reviewers successfully navigate your narratives. Enhance the structure of your narratives using the following strategies/approaches.

Use Essay Organization

Keep the structure of each narrative clear and consistent using an introduction, a thesis or guiding statement, body paragraphs or sections, and a conclusion. Structure body paragraphs to include a topic sentence that outlines the main idea of the paragraph and its relationship to the thesis or guiding statement. The topic sentence should be followed by evidence and analysis.

Establish and Maintain Focus

Amplify your message and provide a sense of cohesion by giving each narrative a clear thesis or guiding statement that outlines the purpose and main points of the specific narrative. Remember that the overview narrative introduces an overarching theme or thesis that should be reflected in each of the others.

Remember Your Readers

Help reviewers navigate your work and see how you have addressed met RTP criteria by using RTP criteria language in headings and topic sentences. Use transitions to help move readers from one idea to another, and keep your writing engaging and error free.

Strategies for Writing Your Narratives

As you write your narratives, be intentional about your process. Here are some strategies for success:

- ☐ **Gather Materials**

In addition to compiling RTP guidelines, criteria, sample texts, and strategic department or university documents, gather any writing resources you may need and reflective writing you have already done as part of annual reviews, presentations, grant and awards, HEA fellowship application, etc. These materials can be used as you develop your narratives.

- ☐ **Reflect on Your Work**

Avoid simply summarizing the contents of your portfolio. Instead, reflect on your growth and impact as an educator and university employee in the areas of service, scholarship, and teaching. Identify which evidence most clearly connects to RTP criteria and the aims of the department and university. Reflect on your strengths, potential areas of improvement, and unique contributions. Consider where readers may need context, clarification, or connections.

- ☐ **Outline Each Narrative**

Outline your narratives to organize your ideas, visibly see where you are addressing the required criteria, and make a compelling and logical case for your advancement. Once you have a draft of your narratives, you may want to reverse outline your work to check your content and organization.

- ☐ **Start Early & Schedule Time**

Make a list of important deadlines, calendar time to work, and begin writing well in advance of deadlines. Break the work of writing your narratives into smaller more manageable tasks. Avoid procrastination by regularly scheduling time to write your narratives.

- ☐ **Seek & Incorporate Feedback**

Consult mentors, colleagues, and outside readers to get feedback on your narratives. Address or incorporate relevant feedback early and often.

- ☐ **Check Your Structure and Style**

Make sure each narrative has an introduction and conclusion, a guiding thesis statement or theme, and organized body paragraphs that include evidence and analysis. Use consistency with headings, spacing, font, etc. Check your page count in relation to RTP guidelines or suggestions. Review your tone and level of formality. Aim for direct, concise, and specific language that avoids jargon and mirrors language reviewers will be looking for when evaluating your work.

- ☐ **Revise and Refine**

Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you review and revise your writing. Consider reading your work aloud, reverse outlining, and getting a final round of feedback on your work. Use spellcheckers, grammarcheckers, and similar tools in addition to proofreading your work several times. Edit to address any sentence-level concerns and issues of clarity and to ensure your narratives are strong examples of your professional work.

- ☐ **Account for Technology**

Become familiar with the submission platform early in the process. Confirm file formats, label files clearly and professionally, and check links and permissions before submitting your portfolio. Submit your work well in advance of the deadline, so you can address any technical issues that arise.