

Provost Office Guidelines for External Peer Review

External Peer Review guidelines are provided as clarification of *Faculty/Staff Handbook* policies. Please refer to *FSH* sections 3520 H-4-b, 3560 E-2.

Processes for awarding tenure and promotion in academic rank require rigorous, fair, and objective evaluation of each candidate's record of productivity. External peer reviews are part of the body of evidence used to evaluate the professional record.

External peer reviews are to be used for consideration for promotion to any rank or for tenure. These reviews are useful in evaluating the productivity of a candidate and his/her regional, national, and/or international reputation as judged by peers. External reviewers' comments regarding the quantity and quality of the candidate's work provide important evidence to inform departmental, college and university judgements of qualifications for promotion/tenure.

Reviewers are asked to provide judgments regarding the body of scholarship produced by a candidate. In a few instances, where this may be deemed practicable and meaningful, reviewers may also be asked to examine material pertaining to the candidate's teaching or other professional activity. If reviewers are to be asked to judge areas outside the candidate's scholarly activity, the concurrence of the dean should be secured before hand.

Three to five external peer review letters are required to be included in faculty dossiers for promotion and tenure consideration (see *FSH* sections 3520 H-4-b, 3560 E-2).

Selection of Reviewers

College and departmental policy should provide a process for generating a list of objective, knowledgeable reviewers. The set of appropriate reviewers is derived with input from the faculty member, other faculty in the discipline, the department chair, and the dean. Suggested reviewers should be leaders in the candidate's field. They should be selected on the basis of their familiarity with the discipline of the candidate, including standards for professional and scholarly activity in the discipline, and must include those who are, or have been, higher education faculty or administrators of peer departments. It may be appropriate to use reviewers who have moved to positions in national professional associations, in government, or in industry. Thus letters should be from tenured professors or individuals of equivalent stature outside academe who are widely recognized in the field, and who are chosen because of their ability to objectively evaluate the candidate's work.

Because outside evaluations are to be independent, objective, and disinterested, selected reviewers should not have a special relationship with the candidate or conflict of interest (e.g. a research collaborator, major professor, supervisor, former departmental colleague).

Final selection of external reviewers should take place at the departmental level, in accordance with college policy. College policy may require the dean to approve the list of reviewers before letters of request are sent to the reviewers. At least two of the reviewers will have been suggested by the candidate. All reviews received must be included in the candidate's dossier. External review letters should be available before the formal review process is started.

For the promotion and/or tenure file, the department administrator will include a paragraph summarizing the qualifications of each external reviewer.

Letter of Request to Reviewer

The letter will request the reviewer to comment on the contributions to the candidate's field through his or her scholarly and other professional activity. The letter to the reviewers may be over the signature of the dean and/or the department chair. Each reviewer should be asked for:

- (a) the nature of his or her acquaintance with the candidate;
- (b) a review and critique of the candidate's scholarly activity (and other areas of professional activity), on the basis of standards in the discipline and the candidate's record.

The dean/chair may also request:

- (c) on the basis of the scholarly record, an assessment as to the candidate's recognition and standing among his or her peers; whether his/her scholarship has had an impact on the discipline; whether it has earned for the candidate a national reputation; and whether the work collectively, is likely to yield further significant advances in knowledge.
- (d) a judgment as to whether the candidate, in the quality and quantity of the scholarship produced, would be competitive for promotion/tenure at the reviewers' institution and why.

Support Materials

The support materials to be supplied to reviewers will include the relevant context statements and department/college criteria (see below), candidate's vita, position descriptions for the relevant period, the professional portfolio, and up to four examples of the candidate's scholarly work. These materials are selected by the chair after consultation with the candidate – i.e. the candidate may review the materials supplied to reviewers and suggest additions or deletions to the chair. College/department context statements and criteria for promotion and tenure are included as appropriate.

Department and College Criteria and Context Statements

The scholarly activity to be reviewed as a part of the tenure and promotion processes must be evaluated relative to approved departmental and college criteria. These criteria are provided to both external and internal reviewers to establish a common basis for judgment of performance. In addition, a department and college context statement is provided describing the faculty member's academic unit and his/her responsibilities. These statements are expected to provide a framework that will, for example, help clarify the candidate's job responsibilities, such as the relative portions of the position dedicated to scholarly activity and teaching, vis-à-vis others in the department and college.

Confidentiality of External Peer Reviews

External peer reviews are confidential. Members of departmental, college or university committees may not disclose the contents of external peer reviews to the candidate or to others not involved in the review process.

The following or similar statement should be included in each letter requesting outside evaluation of a candidate.

Your letter will be provided to departmental, college and university review committees and appropriate administrators; it will be held in confidence from the faculty member being reviewed during the review process. When all deliberations by the University have been completed, the essential content of peer review letters may be shared with the tenure/promotion candidate after every effort has been made to ensure the anonymity of the authors.