GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIRS ON EXTERNAL REVIEW LETTERS

The Provost’s Office guidelines serve as a helpful reference to Department Chairs in soliciting external review letters. However, these guidelines in no way supersede, replace the language of the MSP contract or reflect a comprehensive statement of MSP contract principles. Faculty candidates, members of personnel committees and chairs are expected to act with respect to external review letters and the promotion and tenure process in accordance with relevant sections of the MSP Contract, including but not limited to, Articles II, VII and VIII and Appendix 9, as well as effective memoranda of agreement.

External review letters are an essential component of the tenure-track process and for promotion to Associate Professor, Professor, and conferral of tenure. The purpose of external review letters is to provide an independent evaluation of the candidate’s scholarly reputation and achievements in the discipline. Accordingly, external reviewers should be of the highest echelon of their discipline in order to address the candidate’s eligibility for promotion and/or tenure, and should have achieved the rank, or higher, that is being sought by the candidate under review.

External review letters are solicited by the Department Chair. In most cases, the chair solicits more than five external reviews to ensure that an appropriate number is obtained. All external review letters solicited and received by the Chair are included with the candidate’s evaluation; no such letters received will be dismissed, edited, excluded or discarded.

Guidelines for Selecting External Reviewers:

- The Chair will select qualified individuals to serve as disciplinary reviewers who can provide a fair and independent evaluation of the candidate’s work.
- The Chair will send a request letter to potential reviewers and ensure that the requisite number of reviewers is obtained.
- The Chair will include instructions below to reviewers in the request letter.
- The Chair will draw a list of potential external reviewers from scholars or professionals that may be suggested by the candidate, the dean, the chair and members of the departmental personnel committee. These outside reviewers should be affiliated with institutions that require rigorous research and scholarship, the quality of which either meets or exceeds the standards of the University of Massachusetts Lowell. It is suggested that an explanation be provided if external reviewers are selected from institutions that are not of the same stature.
- External reviewers should be actively engaged in the discipline, including emeriti faculty members.
- External reviewers must have achieved the rank sought by the candidate, or higher.
- External reviewers must not have a vested interest in the outcome of the decision. Such conflicts of interest with the candidate may include but are not limited to:
  - having served as a mentor, such as those who served on the candidate’s dissertation committee or been a post-doctoral advisor;
  - having conducted research collaboration or published with the candidate with the exception of a mega-multiple-authored publication (in some fields, it may be difficult
to find appropriate reviewers who have not collaborated in some way with a candidate for full professor. In such a case, the chair will document this and discuss with the Office of the Provost prior to soliciting a letter;
  o having a close personal or familial relationship;
  o having been a student of the candidate;
  o having a professional or financial stake in the candidate’s promotion.

**Procedure for Candidates:**

- The candidate may provide a list of suggestions for external reviewers to their Department Chairperson (see Appendix 2: External Review Evaluator Selections). It is recommended this process be completed by April 1 of the academic year prior to the promotion and tenure review year.
- It is suggested that the candidate provide a list of up to six names of potential reviewers to the Department Chairperson. However, the candidate may suggest additional potential reviewers. The candidate may also inform the Department Chairperson of persons they wish to exclude from consideration as potential reviewers on the basis of real or perceived conflict of interest.
- Candidates must complete the Waiver Form and indicate which of three options they wish to exercise (see Appendix 1).
- The candidate will provide to his/her chair:
  o Completed Waiver Form (Appendix 1),
  o Current CV,
  o The narrative statement of accomplishments (see Provost’s Tenure and Promotion Guidelines),
  o A reasonable number of samples of scholarly work for submission to External Reviewers.

The candidate will not solicit letters from or have any contact with external reviewers during the entire promotion and tenure process.

**Confidentiality of the External Review Process:**

- External reviews provided in confidence carry the highest value.
- To the extent possible, external reviewers shall be assured confidentiality of reviewing bodies. *Accordingly, to protect the confidentiality of external peer reviewers, letters written by the DPC, CPC or Dean should not use the name of reviewers. They may quote or cite in evaluation letters at their respective levels; instead, citations should read “reviewer 2 indicated that….”*
- External reviewers shall be advised by the chair and prior to submitting the review letter as to whether or not the candidate has waived the right to see the external review letters. (see Appendix 1: External Review Letters Waiver Statement).
- If the candidate elects to view the external review letters, in either complete or redacted form, as specified in the External Review Letters Waiver Statement, the external reviewers will be notified by the Chair of the candidate’s decision.

**Procedure for Reporting on Selection of Reviewers by Department Chairs and Deans:**

External Reviewer Selection:

- No more than half of this list should be reviewers selected by the candidate. The list should not include reviewers excluded by the candidate.
• The final list of external reviewers will not be shared with the candidate.
• By May 1, Department Chairpersons shall solicit external reviewers from the final list via a preliminary email to obtain early commitment from reviewers and their personal assessment of any potential conflicts of interest.
• The Department Chairperson will provide the candidate materials to the External Reviewers.
• If the Department Chairperson does not receive at least five external review letter commitments per candidate by July 15, they will solicit additional reviewers of the candidate.
• The Department Chair will upload the following to the P&T file share, External Review Letter Folder for each candidate:
  o Final copy of the External Review Letters Waiver Statement, Appendix 1
  o Final copy of the External Review Letters Evaluator Selections, Appendix 2

  In each External Review Evaluator Folder:
  o Department Chairperson’s letter requesting the external review
  o A copy of the external review letter
  o External reviewer’s CV
  o External reviewer’s Bio paragraph
• If the candidate elects to view the External Review Letters and this is stipulated in the External Review Letters Waiver Statement, the chair must appraise the external reviewers that letters will be shared with the candidate.

Materials Provided/Requested of the External Reviewers:
• Department Chairpersons will obtain the external reviewer’s CV and bio paragraph.
• External Reviewers will be provided with a letter outlining the review expectations, the candidate’s current CV, the narrative statement, and a reasonable number of samples of the candidate’s scholarly work (see Appendix 4 and 5). The Department Chairperson will inform the external reviewer if the candidate has waived their right to view the external letter of evaluation.
• Department Chairpersons’ letters to external reviewers should reference specific requirements for promotion and tenure as set forth in the Massachusetts Society of Professors contract, Articles VII and VIII.
• The Department Chairperson will provide all reviewers with the same set of materials, and an identical letter soliciting their review.

Suggested Areas to be Addressed by External Reviewers and Noted in Letter to Reviewers:
• The nature and length of the external reviewer’s past or present association to the candidate.
• The significance of the candidate’s contributions to the discipline/profession.
• An assessment of the candidate’s development as a scholar compared with others in her/his field who are at a similar stage of their career.
• The quality and quantity of the candidate’s work, and the appropriateness of the venues/outlets used by the candidate to disseminate scholarly works.
• Assessment of papers/discoveries/innovations published by the candidate that may have a major impact on the field.
• The extent to which the candidate’s record reflects a productive scholarly and creative activity agenda compared to peers in the discipline. Scholarly and creative activity include
publications, presentations, performances, exhibits, extramurally funded activities, intellectual property, and corporate relationships.

- Any relevant information about common practices within the discipline such as: conventions regarding multiple authorship, expectations for extramural funding, collaborative interactions, appropriate terminal outlets for publication, or other factors that may help the university evaluate the candidate relative to disciplinary expectations.
- Special distinctions and honors achieved by the candidate.
- External Reviewers are requested to provide a clear recommendation for or against the desired personnel action based upon their assessment of the candidate’s research.

**External Reviewers should:**

- Provide their evaluation, CV, and bio paragraph by September 1, if possible.

**TIMELINE**

- **April 1**  Candidate provides list of potential reviewers and those to exclude from the reviewer list
- **May 1**  Chair solicits external reviews from final list of reviewers
- **July 15**  Chair provides a list of reviewers who have agreed to conduct the review to the DPC and the Dean, for information purposes
- **September 1**  External reviewers should submit their evaluation, CV, and bio paragraph