



**PROVOST'S GUIDELINES FOR THE PROMOTION AND TENURE PROCESS**  
**For Applicants, Committees, Chairs, and Deans**  
Approved by the Provost April 2017

**GUIDELINES TO DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AND DEANS ON EXTERNAL REVIEW LETTERS**

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, unbiased, objective 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 must have achieved the rank, or higher, that is being sought by the candidate under review.

**External review letters are solicited by the Department Chair.** Typically, five external reviews comprise the first step in the process of evaluating the candidate. In most cases, the chair solicits more than five external reviews to ensure that the requisite number is obtained. All external review letters received by the Chair must be included with the candidate's evaluation; no letters received may be dismissed, edited, excluded or discarded.

**Guidelines for Selecting External Reviewers:**

- The Chair is responsible for making the selection of qualified individuals to serve as disciplinary reviewers who can provide a fair, objective and arms-length evaluation of the candidate's work.
- The Chair is responsible for sending the request letter to potential reviewers, and ensuring that the requisite number of reviewers is obtained.
- The Chairperson 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.
- A justification must 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.
- External reviewers **must** be at "arm's length" from the candidate. An external reviewer who is at "arm's length" will not have the appearance of a vested interest, based on his or her own career, nor a personal interest in the career advancement of the candidate under review. An "arm's length" reviewer shall not have:
  - served on the candidate's dissertation committee,
  - financially supported the candidate,
  - taught the candidate during the candidate's graduate education or post-doctoral experience,

- Been a co-author or co-principal investigator with the candidate on publications or grants within the past five years (with the exception of co-authors on a mega-multi-authored publication)
- Have the appearance of a vested interest, based on his or her own career, nor a personal interest in the career advancement of the candidate under review.
- Reviewers shall not include:
  - personal friends or family relations, including in-laws or
  - one's own former students, or
  - co-workers at UMass Lowell, even if now employed elsewhere,
- Individuals co-serving with the candidate in positions such as in professional societies, editorial boards, and grant reviews ARE allowed to act as external peer reviewers.
- External reviewers must have achieved the rank sought by the candidate, or higher.
- External reviewers shall be asked to write regarding the quality and level of the candidate's accomplishments in research/scholarship/creative work and the impact that this work has had on the discipline (see Areas to be Addressed by External Reviewers).
- External reviews provided in confidence carry the highest value.
- External reviewers shall be advised 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, the external reviewers will be notified by the Chair of the candidate's request, and that only redacted copies of their letters will be provided to the candidate. External review letters will be redacted by the Department Chairperson in an attempt to remove any identifying statements, logos or other indicators of identity to protect the confidentiality of the reviewer.
- External reviewers shall be assured confidentiality of reviewing bodies to the extent possible. 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 indicate "according to one of the five reviewers...", or "reviewer 2 indicated that...".

#### **Procedure for Candidates:**

- The candidate will provide a list of suggestions for external review to their Department Chairperson (see Appendix 2: External Review Evaluator Selections). It is recommended this process be completed by April 30 in the promotion and tenure review year.
- The candidate should provide a list of up to six names of potential reviewers to the Department Chairperson. The candidate may also include names of up to four persons they choose to exclude from consideration as potential reviewers on the basis of real or perceived conflict of interest.

- The candidate will complete the External Review Letters Waiver Statement and return it to their Department Chairperson along with the list of suggested reviewers. (see Appendix 1).
- **The candidate will not solicit letters from external reviewers, nor should they have any communication with external reviewers regarding their evaluation during the entire process.**
- The candidate will provide their current CV, an executive summary of the key activities and accomplishments for the period under review (recommended length three pages), and a reasonable number of samples of impactful scholarly work to their Department Chairperson for submission to External Reviewers. Candidates may wish to provide an advanced electronic version of the “Letter of Application” to the department chair for distribution to external reviewers.

### **Procedure for Department Chairs and Deans:**

#### External Reviewer Selection:

- The Department Chairperson and Dean will provide their selection of External Reviewers in Appendix 2.
- The Department Chairperson is responsible for selecting the final list of external reviewers from Appendix 2 and informing the Dean. The list should typically contain no more than three evaluators suggested 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.

#### **External Review Letter Process:**

- Five external reviews are expected; in most cases, more than five external reviews are typically solicited to provide the requisite number.
- **All External Review Letters received must be included with the candidate materials, letters received may not be dismissed, edited, excluded or discarded.**
- Department Chairpersons shall solicit external evaluators from the final list with a preliminary email to obtain early commitment from evaluators by the recommended date of May 15 (see Appendix 3).
- The Department Chairperson will provide the candidate materials, as specified above, to the External Reviewers.
- If the Department Chairperson does not receive five external review letter commitments by mid-summer, they will inform the Dean of their intent to solicit additional evaluators of the candidate.
- A copy of the external review letter, the external reviewer’s CV and bio paragraph, and the Department Chairperson’s letter requesting the external review, will be provided to the Promotion and Tenure reviewing bodies. This material will be included in the P&T file share.
- If the candidate elects to view the External Review Letters and this is stipulated in the External Review Letters Waiver Statement, the external reviewers must be appraised that redacted letters will be shared with the candidate. In this situation, the candidate will be provided a hardcopy of the External Review Letters which have been redacted by the Department Chairperson to remove any identifying

statements, personal information or logos that might compromise the identity of the reviewer.

**Materials Provided/Requested of the External Reviewers:**

- Evaluators will be provided with a letter outlining the review expectations, the candidate's current CV, an executive summary of the key activities and accomplishments for the period under review (3-page maximum), and a reasonable number of samples of the candidate's impactful 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 should reference the Massachusetts Society of Professors contract, Articles VII and VIII, for specific requirements for promotion and tenure.
- The Department Chairperson will provide all reviewers with the same set of materials, and a substantially identical letter soliciting their review.
- Department Chairpersons will request the external reviewer's CV and bio paragraph.

**Areas to be Addressed by External Reviewers:**

- Nature and length of past or present association to the candidate.
- The significance and impact of the candidate's contributions to the discipline/profession.
- Assessment of the candidate's stature and reputation in the discipline.
- The quality and quantity of the candidate's work, and the appropriateness of the venues/outlets used by the candidate to disseminate scholarly works.
- Which papers/discoveries/innovations published by the candidate will have a major impact on the field. Why?
- The extent to which the candidate's record reflects a productive scholarly agenda compared to peers in the discipline. Scholarly activity includes publications, presentations, performances, 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 objectively 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.

**External Reviewers should:**

- Provide their evaluation, CV, and bio paragraph by July 31, if possible.