

6.3. Guidelines for Selecting Reviewers and Reviewing External Evaluation Letters

Governing Policies

Section 8, Faculty Handbook – Promotion and Tenure

Procedure

As per the Faculty Handbook, Department Heads are required to solicit evaluations letters from external reviewers for inclusion in promotion and tenure application packages of tenure/tenure-track faculty. Mines needs to see clear evidence of a national and international reputation for a candidate to be promoted to the rank of Professor (as noted in Faculty Handbook, Section 4.2.3). In the case of promotion to Associate Professor and/or granting tenure, Mines needs to see clear evidence of progress toward a national or international reputation. For both, the most convincing testimonials are letters from distinguished members of the community of scholars in the candidate's field **who do not have a direct relationship** with the candidate. External evaluators should be provided, for their review, the promotion and tenure package provided to the Department Head by the candidate excluding sections: 2 (DH Memorandum), 3 (Current Faculty Contract), 6, 7, 8 (Letters from DPT, DH, and Dean, respectively) and 9 (Performance Evaluations) as defined in the Promotion & Tenure Dossier Template available on the Academic Affairs Faculty Resources website.

External reviewers are asked to evaluate a candidate's promotion and tenure package, and then provide recommendations addressing the following considerations:

- the quality, importance, impact, and quantity of the scholarly work produced by the candidate,
- how the overall accomplishments of the candidate compare to the accomplishments of other scholars in the discipline at the same point in their careers,
- an overall evaluation of the candidate's scholarly strengths and weaknesses, and
- if the reviewer is employed in higher education, whether or not the candidate should be tenured and/or promoted at Mines.

Considerations in soliciting reviews from external reviewers should include:

- reviewers from peer or aspirant peer programs and institutions (e.g., other R-1 research institutions);
- reviewers who are highly regarded in the candidate's field, have exceptional scholarship records based on strong publication records, and if in academic employment are at the Professor level. Associate Professors may be acceptable letter writers for files only for promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor when it is clear that they are (inter)nationally recognized, possess pertinent expertise, and understand promotion and tenure norms at peer and aspirational peer institutions;
- reviewers who do not have a close relationship to the candidate (i.e., former MS, PhD, or postdoctoral advisors; close collaborators (co-

PIs or frequent co-authors); Mines colleagues; or anyone else with a perceived conflict of interest); the greater the "distance" between the reviewer and the candidate, the stronger the recommendation. External letters are ideally independent of the candidate.

- for promotion to Professor, at least two international external review letters, and reviewers from the National Academies should be considered and contacted if possible.

Candidates and the Departmental Promotion and Tenure (DPT) Committee shall each supply the Department Head with 5 to 6 names of external reviewers. The candidate may also request that certain individuals not be contacted for reviews; this request should be honored unless the Department Head and DPT Committee determine there are good reasons not to do so. In consultation with the Chair of the DPT Committee, the Department Head will then request external letters. For faculty that are jointly appointed to another department or whose participation is required for an interdisciplinary program (IDP) to be a viable program, the primary Department Head should consult the other Department Head(s) or IDP Director for suggestions for letter writers as well. The candidate dossier should ultimately contain a total of 5 to 7 letters of recommendation from external reviewers, with a balance between names suggested by the candidate, the Department Head, and the DPT Committee. A mandatory table goes forward with the dossier before the external letters that includes the requested letter writers' names, titles, institutions, a notation indicating which reviewers were selected by whom, and their response. At least 1/3 of the requested letters should be from reviewers recommended by the candidate. It is not appropriate to exclude any solicited letters.

Candidates should not discuss their dossier with potential reviewers, lest this be viewed as attempting to influence their independence of judgment. Likewise, neither the Department Head nor the DPT Committee should reveal their views or assessments about the candidate (including annual evaluations) in communicating with letter writers. The Department Head collects the external review letters, and inserts them into the candidate's dossier. The dossier should be forwarded to the DPT Committee when at least half of the requested letters have been received. The committee must review each letter from all external reviewers before making a final assessment.

National data show that implicit bias may be an issue in evaluating candidates with respect to race and gender. For example, letters of recommendation for men often are longer and refer more to a candidate's publications, research or other career achievements, while letters for women may make reference to their personalities, personal lives or other irrelevant data, and contain fewer descriptors about the quality of their work. Similarly, scholars from other countries may have different cultural expectations for the length and style of letters, which may be shorter than American letters with fewer effusive adjectives. Likewise, research suggests that candidates from historically excluded groups are often evaluated lower, even for the exact same resume, and that supposedly neutral, quantitative data may be evaluated by reviewers differently for majority and minority candidates. Promotion and Tenure Committees should consider these elements when looking at internal and external letters of recommendation for faculty.

A template letter of invitation to external reviewers is provided below for both Associate Professor- and Professor-level promotion. For issues of equity, this letter should be used largely as written, with edits allowable for disciplinary norms and any specificity required for a specific candidate. In the request for letters of recommendation, the University and Department expectations must be clear to the external letter writers.

For promotion and tenure at the Associate Professor level:

Dear Professor XXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to provide an external evaluation of Assistant Professor XXXXX, who is being considered for tenure and promotion to the rank Associate Professor in the Department of XXXXXX at Colorado School of Mines (Mines).

At Mines, promotion to Associate Professor is based on the individual's established professional record, indications that the individual will continue to grow professionally, and evidence that the individual will continue to be an asset to the institution. Mines expects faculty members who are promoted to Associate Professor to have demonstrated:

- Dedicated, high quality student instruction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Potential for national and international professional recognition.
- Successful mentoring and completion of graduate students at the PhD, MS-thesis, and MS-non-thesis levels, where those graduate programs exist.
- Impactful and sustained scholarship, which may include entrepreneurial outcomes.
- Demonstrated ability to attract external resources as needed to support a strong scholarship program.
- A history of professional, respectful, and ethical interactions.
- Professional service contributions that enhance the faculty member's visibility and the visibility of Mines.
- University service that demonstrates measurable contributions to Mines.

We would appreciate your assistance in evaluating the merits of Dr. XXXXX's record of scholarship and professional service. Evaluation of the candidate's teaching is conducted internally, but if you have information about the quality of Dr. XXXXX contributions to pedagogy, we welcome comments on that aspect of the candidate's case as well.

In particular, I would appreciate:

1. A statement of how you know the candidate and their work. In this context, please address any circumstances that might raise issues of impartiality as they related to your assessment of the candidate.
2. A critique of the quality, importance, impact, and quantity of the candidate's work in comparison to the work of others in this discipline at comparable stages in their careers. We would particularly appreciate your evaluation of the contribution that the candidate's work has made to the field, viewing published works separately or in combination as seems appropriate. We would also be interested in your judgment of the quality of the journals and the importance of the conferences through which the candidate has communicated this work.
3. An evaluation of the candidate's scholarly strengths and challenges, and/or other insights you might have about the candidate's scholarly accomplishments.
4. A comment on professional leadership role(s) that Dr. XXXXX has had and on their ability to continue building a national or international reputation as they continue in their career.
5. Finally, we ask that you provide your opinion of how Dr. XXXXX's application should be considered for promotion and tenure at Mines.

6. A biographical statement for yourself of less than one page. Although our departmental faculty know you and your work, the campus committee and administrators would find your biographical sketch helpful when considering your letter.

The enclosed electronic package includes: 1) Dr. XXXXX's curriculum vitae, 2) their personal statement, and 3) a series of explanatory narratives, which we hope you will evaluate with respect to our criteria for tenure and promotion above.

Our process requires that we receive your letter by October XX, 20XX, so that it can be included in the materials that are examined internally; please let me know if additional time is required. If you have any questions about Dr. XXXXX's materials or experience, please contact me directly. In accordance with our procedures, we must ask you not to communicate with either the candidate whose work you are reviewing or other members of the university concerning your evaluation or the review process.

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your report. Neither the names of the referees nor the full contents of their letters are shared with the candidate, although snippets of your letter may be included in our summaries and could be seen by the candidate. Your full letter of evaluation will be made available to the Promotion and Tenure Committee in our department and will become part of the candidate's file reviewed by appropriate committees and administrators at the university. I should add that in light of a Supreme Court decision (EEOC vs. University of Pennsylvania), such reports may be subject to involuntary disclosure in legal proceedings.

Thank you very much for taking the time to convey your professional evaluation. On behalf of my colleagues, I offer our gratitude and appreciation for your comments and perspectives.

Sincerely,

XXX

For promotion to Professor:

Dear Professor XXXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to provide an external evaluation of Associate Professor XXXXXX, who is being considered for promotion to the rank of Professor in the Department of XXXXXX at Colorado School of Mines (Mines).

At Mines, promotion to Professor is based on the individual's established professional record, indications that the individual will continue to grow professionally, and evidence that the individual will continue to be an asset to the institution. Mines expects faculty members who are promoted to Professor to have demonstrated:

- Significant leadership in the candidate's field(s) that enhances the faculty member's visibility and the visibility of Mines. The leadership may be associated with teaching, scholarship, and/or organizations that promote either education or research.
- National and international recognition and reputation.
- Success with mentoring and completion of graduate students at the PhD, MS-thesis, and MS-non-thesis levels, where those graduate programs exist.
- Institutional service, including leadership roles.
- Demonstrated mentoring.

The above criteria build upon a continued record of the accomplishments below that are expected of those promoted to the rank of both Associate Professor and Professor:

- Dedication to high quality teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- Impactful and sustained scholarship.
- The ability to attract external resources in support of their scholarship as needed to support a strong scholarship program.

We would appreciate your assistance in evaluating the merits of Dr. XXXXX record of scholarship and professional service. Evaluation of the candidate's teaching is conducted internally, but if you have information about the quality of Dr. XXXXX contributions to pedagogy, we welcome comments on that aspect of the candidate's case as well.

In particular, I would appreciate:

1. A statement of how you know the candidate and their work. In this context, please address any circumstances that might raise issues of impartiality as they related to your assessment of the candidate.
2. A critique of the quality, importance, impact, and quantity of the candidate's work in comparison to the work of others in this discipline at comparable stages in their careers. We would particularly appreciate your evaluation of the contribution that the candidate's work has made to the field, viewing published works separately or in combination as seems appropriate. We would also be interested in your judgment of the quality of the journals and the importance of the conferences through which the candidate has communicated this work.
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and Tenure Committee in our department and will become part of the candidate's file reviewed by appropriate committees and administrators at the university. I should add that in light of a Supreme Court decision (EEOC vs. University of Pennsylvania), such reports may be subject to involuntary disclosure in legal proceedings.

Thank you very much for taking the time to convey your professional evaluation. On behalf of my colleagues, I offer our gratitude and appreciation for your comments and perspectives.

Sincerely,

XXX

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