

**Policy on External Reviews**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Updated May 2021

This memo outlines the College of Arts and Sciences policies for soliciting external reviewers for faculty members' promotion and/or tenure files.

- External reviews are required for promotion of all tenured and tenure-track candidates to Associate and full Professor
- External reviews are required for promotion of candidates to Associate or full Professor of Practice.
- External reviews are required for promotion of all Research Professors to Associate and full Research Professor.

The UNL *Guidelines* note that the University has confidence in the professionalism of those whose judgments are sought. The *Guidelines* add that faculty and administrators must assess and weigh the content of reviews in the context in which they are provided, a context "that includes the extent to which those reviews are confidential." However, reviews may not "be routinely or automatically discounted simply because a candidate chooses not to waive the right to access the reviews or the right to know the identity of the reviewers." (V.D.4) As noted in the *CAS Handbook*, anonymous contributions should not be solicited and unsolicited anonymous contributions should not be included in any file for review with two exceptions: student evaluations collected as part of an institutional student evaluation process and evaluations of administrative performance (e.g., as a department chair).

Every tenure and/or promotion file must include a minimum of four external (to the University of Nebraska) and independent letters of review; we suggest six letters as a goal. Independent in this context refers to individuals who have had no (or only limited) professional or personal relationships with the candidate and who have been chosen for their ability to provide an objective and disinterested assessment. The following are *not* considered independent reviewers:

- Dissertation or postdoctoral advisors
- Current or former collaborators
- Former colleagues
- Relatives or personal friends
- Business partners/associates

Exceptions to the above criteria may be possible in unusual circumstances but must be approved in advance.

In the file the authors of external review letters should be clearly identified in terms of whether they were suggested by the department (chair or committee) or the candidate, the qualifications of each reviewer, and the relationship (if any) of the reviewer to the candidate. A copy of the letter soliciting the review should also be included. External review letters that are *not* independent or that are not solicited by the

administrative officer must be identified as such in the file and will not count toward the four required letters. If such letters are included, they should be placed after the independent letters in the file.

### External Reviewers' Qualifications

According to the SVCAA's memo from 2008, "Generally external reviewers should have the full professorial rank, but they must at least occupy a rank equal to or above that being considered for the candidate. Reviewers must be chosen who are qualified to judge the quality of the candidate's work because of their own knowledge of the field. Generally we would expect reviewers to hold positions at institutions comparable to or more highly ranked than UNL."

The College of Arts and Sciences *strongly prefers* that external reviewers be full professors at institutions categorized as Carnegie Classified Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity (sometimes termed "Carnegie R1" institutions). You can find the Carnegie Classification of an institution at <https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/lookup/lookup.php>. We note that the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor *requires* a minimum of three reviewers of full professor rank from R1 institutions.

The College recognizes that there are times when it will be appropriate to use a reviewer who does not meet these criteria. For example, you might want to solicit a review from a highly qualified individual at a foreign institution, a U.S. government lab, or a less research-intensive institution (e.g., a Carnegie "R2"). Similarly, you might want to solicit a review from an exceptionally well-qualified individual who is an associate professor at an R1 institution (only relevant in evaluations of tenure and/or promotion to associate professor).

Chairs must submit for approval the names, rank, and affiliations of *all* proposed reviewers. For proposed reviewers who are not full professors at R1 institutions, the chair must also provide a justification for why the individual's qualifications are appropriate for conducting the review. Approval must be given before any contact is made.

Below are examples of appropriate justifications:

#### Not a faculty member at an R1 Institution

Dr. Jones is a potential reviewer for Professor Wolf's promotion case for full professor. Dr. Jones is a well-known evolutionary biologist who has made important contributions to understanding the evolution of sexual reproduction. She was on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania for 25 years and is now a senior scientist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Research Institute in California. More about her current research can be seen at [URL].

#### Faculty member at an institution outside the United States

Sir Richard Smith is the Holmes Professor of Natural Philosophy at the Mathematics Institute at the University of Oxford; his rank is at least the equal of a full professor in the United States. He has held a visiting position at Berkeley and is the past president of the International Mathematical Union. Dr. Smith is a world expert on .....; his research is described at [URL].

#### Faculty member who is an associate professor

Dr. Joby is an associate professor at The Ohio State University specializing in American Indian and New Zealand Maori literatures and cultures. She is one of the founding members of the MLA environmental/eco-criticism group and her scholarship was recognized with the best book award for eco-criticism in 2012. Her work directly speaks to the promotion case with regard to indigenous and ecocritical methodologies and perspectives. As a result, we believe Dr. Joby would provide valuable expertise in this promotion review.

These CAS policies are designed to ensure that the external reviewers chosen can make fair and rigorous assessments of the faculty member's work in terms of quality and impact.