

Guidelines for External and Internal Letters of Reference

In accordance with the Provost's Guidelines for Faculty Appointments, Reappointments, Nonrenewals, Promotions, and Conferral of Tenure (Revised January 1998), the School of Medicine will implement the selection and solicitation of internal and external letters of reference for faculty appointment, promotion, and conferral of tenure as follows:

An "external referee" is an individual who currently does not hold a faculty appointment at the University of Pittsburgh. An "internal referee" is an individual who currently holds a faculty appointment at the University of Pittsburgh. A "candidate" is a faculty member who has been proposed for appointment, promotion, or conferral of tenure.

For tenure and tenure stream actions, the Provost's Guidelines require that a minimum of 6 letters from external referees be included in the candidate's portfolio. Additional letters may be included from internal referees, as long as the referee does not hold an appointment in the candidate's department. For promotions or appointments in the appointment stream, an additional number of letters may be included from internal referees, as long as the referee does not hold an appointment in the candidate's department.

The Department Chair shall seek input from the candidate and the department committee for appointments and promotions to develop a list of 12 potential external referees and four potential internal referees. Of the total potential referees, the candidate may submit up to three suggested names, with the remainder suggested by the department committee and department chair. The department chair will submit the list of potential referees to OFA along with the candidate's dossier.

The potential referees should be well-qualified scientists, scholars, educators, and clinicians who are able to provide a fair and objective evaluation of the candidate's work, and whose rank is equivalent to or higher than the candidate's proposed rank. In general, a potential referee should have an *arms-length** relationship with the candidate. The nature of the professional relationship of the candidate and the potential referee must be specified and there must be a brief statement of the referee's academic qualifications. The majority of referees should have no working relationship with the candidate, including no collaborations, shared grants and/or co-authorship, over the five years. When nominating a candidate in the Henry system, this information is provided in the referee table under "Reason Selected."

The Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA) will solicit and receive all letters. A candidate is not permitted to solicit a letter from a referee.

Members of the Tenured Faculty Promotions and Appointments (TFPA) Committee or the Appointment Stream Faculty Promotions and Appointments (ASFPA) Committee may recommend additional referees.

OFA will include all letters received from referees in the candidate's portfolio.

***Arm's length referee letters**

The preponderance of letters of external review should be solicited from scholars who are arms-length from the candidate, excluding former advisors, co-authors/co-editors, research collaborators, and current/former colleagues. When this is not possible or feasible as, for example, in a new or emerging field of study, an explanation should be provided in the dossier.

Guidance:

The concept of arm's length is a principle that implies that the external referees have no connections or relationships with the candidate being reviewed in order to increase the likelihood of an objective assessment.

Arm's-length letters are from external referees who are independent of the faculty candidate, who are known scholars in the field, and who are able to provide an objective evaluation of the candidate's work.

It is recognized that in the context of collaborative research in certain fields, it may be difficult to find external referees who have no connection with the candidate, but external referees should not include individuals who have collaborated closely and frequently with the candidate in the production of scholarly works and publications.

Referees should not:

- be a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the nominee

Arm's length referees should not:

- be closely professionally affiliated with the nominee, as a result of having in the last five years:
 - been a supervisor or a trainee of the nominee;
 - collaborated, published or shared funding with the nominee, or have plans to do so in the immediate future;
 - been employed by the University of Pittsburgh;
 - feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the nomination.