

## External Reviews for Promotion and Tenure

The UND *Faculty Handbook*, as detailed in the section on Promotion and Tenure, requires that faculty with research obligations seeking tenure and/or promotion include external reviews as part of the review process. According to [Section I.V.3.E](#), “The purpose of external review is to provide evaluation and validation from outside the University of the candidate’s record in relation to generally accepted standards within a particular academic field.” Therefore, the external review process should be designed to ensure an objective evaluation of the candidate’s scholarship, at a minimum.

To support this effort, the following guidelines are provided to ensure that external reviews are both solicited and used in a uniform fashion across campus.

### **Selecting External Reviewers** (See *Faculty Handbook*, [I.V.3.E](#))

1. According to the UND *Faculty Handbook* Section [I.V.3.E](#), “External reviewers should also be individuals who can fairly, objectively, and completely evaluate the candidate’s record. Personal friends, former students, or former mentors, and – absent documented rationale – coauthors, are excluded.”
2. External reviewers must meet the following criteria:
  - a. At or above the rank to which the faculty member is being promoted.
  - b. Tenured, if tenure is being sought.
  - c. If practicing professional (rather than academic), professional credentials should be identified as commensurate with rank.
  - d. Have sufficient expertise to offer objective evaluation of scholarly record.
  - e. External reviewers must not be family members, former students, or former mentors. The Department Chair may select one co-author or former co-author as an external reviewer if sufficient justification is provided.
  - f. Colleges must follow all of the above criteria and can also add additional or more stringent criteria. Such additions must be applied consistently for all applicants for tenure and promotion.
3. The selection of reviewers should include the faculty member, Department Chair, and other department members, as appropriate. Each college/school and/or department should consider how many external reviewers are required, and this expectation should be reflected in College and/or Department bylaws. Note that the UND *Faculty Handbook* assumes multiple reviewers.
4. The candidate is responsible for submitting recommendations for external reviewers to the Department Chair by the date required by college and/or department bylaws using the [form](#) provided by the Office of the Provost. The list of reviewers submitted by the candidate should include a sufficient number of individuals to allow for the possibility that some individuals may decline a request to serve as a reviewer, not respond to the request, etc.
5. The Department Chair will ultimately approve the list of external reviewers. The final list of external reviewers should represent a balance of external reviewers suggested by the candidate and external reviewers chosen by the Department Chair in consultation with the department committee responsible for reviewing promotion and tenure files and/or the Dean, if appropriate. The recommendation from the Office of the Provost is that approximately half of the letters should be from among the suggestions provided by the candidate, and the other half should be selected by the Department Chair in consultation with the department committee

responsible for reviewing promotion and tenure files.

6. The Department Chair (or Dean's Office, if applicable) is charged with ensuring that all letters are solicited and received in order for them to be included in the candidate's dossier upon submission of the dossier at the required date. External review letters should not be solicited by the candidate.
7. The candidate can secure additional external review letters, which *may* be included in the promotion and tenure materials as permitted but cannot be used as substitutes for the letters secured and evaluated as part of the external review process.

### **Inviting the External Reviewers**

Departments and Colleges can use an approach that works best for them. However, the same process should be used for all candidates and for all external reviewers, and the following considerations should be observed:

1. Invite external reviews to provide a letter of evaluation, *not a letter of support*. This language is important, as support letters do not meet the requirements of the external review letter. (Note that candidates can submit letters of support, such as from previous students, with their folders, but these should not be used as external review information nor as evaluative information).
2. Be sure to notify external reviewers that their letter will be read by those voting on the candidate's dossier as part of the process for determining if tenure and/or promotion should be awarded to the candidate. Also, please indicate that while the letters will not—as a matter of practice—be provided to the candidate, the letters are subject to North Dakota open records laws and may be seen by the candidate should such an open records request be made.
3. External reviewers should be contacted by the Department Chair, Associate Dean, or Dean, with a request that outlines the expectations and timeline of the review. Be sure to give the reviewer sufficient time – sending the request out in May is strongly advised, for a due date in July. Many potential reviewers are committed by June. This will also give you time to make additional requests if a reviewer who commits is subsequently unable to complete the review. A sample form [letter](#) is provided on the VPAA website.
4. The external review of scholarship is required by the UND *Faculty Handbook*. If the Department also wants an external review of teaching and/or service, that should be specified in the Department's Bylaws and should be consistent across all faculty candidates.
5. External reviewers should be provided a summary of departmental guidelines for tenure and/or promotion requirements.

### **Using the External Reviews**

Please include the approved list of external reviewers and their qualifications (see [form](#) on the VPAA website) in the promotion and tenure packets preceding the external reviewers' evaluation letters. The letters that are submitted by external reviewers can vary substantially, and it is important to identify the key factors from each that will assist in the evaluation of the tenure and promotion application. In order to organize the information, please use the following format in the evaluations prepared by the Chair and Dean, as well as committees that review the promotion/tenure packet:

1. Identify how many letters were received from approved external reviewers

2. Provide a statement describing how the chosen external reviewers were qualified to offer the review (see sentences 2-4 below)
3. Offer a brief statement of the consensus across the reviewers (i.e. whether to support promotion and/or tenure; see sentence 5 below)
4. Describe briefly the main points of consensus or convergence across reviewers (see sentence 6 below)
5. Describe briefly how the reviewers diverged in their evaluation (see sentences 7-8 below)
6. Offer 2-3 illustrative quotes or specific examples related to the candidate's impact on the profession (see paragraph 3 below)
7. Offer your interpretation/conclusion of the external review feedback (see final sentence below)

**Example of a summary of the external review portion of the evaluation:**

I reviewed letters from 4 external reviewers of Dr. Smith's tenure folder. Each of them currently hold the rank of Professor in XXXX or a closely related field, three of them are currently publishing in the same specialty area as Dr. Smith, and 2 of them hold federal grants in the area of XXXX. None of them have close or personal ties to Dr. Smith; 1 of the 4 has been a co-author on 2 papers, the most recent of which was written 3 years ago. Together, this group of external reviewers can offer expert and impartial feedback on Dr. Smith's tenure and promotion.

All four of the reviews concluded that Dr. Smith is a solid candidate for both tenure and promotion and noted that she has made several important contributions to the field as an Assistant Professor. Three of the four pointed to the unique contribution of XXXXX, and all four noted that Dr. Smith's expertise in XXXX has furthered the development of work in XXXXX. One reviewer pointed to a potential area of concern in that Dr. Smith is frequently second or third author; others noted that seems consistent with collaborative work. Given the priority of the Department of XXXX on forming interdisciplinary collaborative opportunities, I believe that this is appropriate, and it does not detract from my evaluation of Dr. Smith's work.

The impact of Dr. Smith's work is captured by one reviewer, who stated "Dr. Smith's recent paper on XXX illustrated some previously overlooked implications of the XXX theory and has potential to re-energize work in this important XXX." Another pointed to Dr. Smith's "strong grasp of methodology" and "incisive analytic skills" as particular strengths that would cut across a wide range of research applications.

In sum, the external reviews offer additional support that Dr. Smith is achieving at and above the level of her peers across the discipline.