

**INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY AT INDIANAPOLIS
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER'S COMMENTS
REGARDING OUTSIDE LETTERS**

Practices and procedures for obtaining outside letters of review vary among the departments and schools. External assessment letters are required for all promotion and/or tenure cases, and are expected to address teaching or performance, research and creative activities, and service, with particular attention to the candidate's chosen area of excellence. In all instances, the relationship between the candidate and the external reviewer should be as independent as possible.

Ordinarily, chairs should solicit outside letters. However, chairs may delegate this responsibility to another member of the department, such as the chair of the primary committee, in accord with established departmental or school procedures. In most instances, the candidate should not be involved in the process of identifying external evaluators, with two exceptions: 1) the candidate should be allowed to list those he or she would definitely not want to serve as an external reviewer, and 2) the candidate may provide a list of key scholars in the field if these are not known to the chair or the chair's designee. Generally, the candidate should not provide any outside letters. If outside letters are added by the candidate, these must be clearly designated as letters of reference and candidates should recognize that letters solicited by them do not have the same value as letters solicited by the chair or dean; candidate-solicited letters should be placed in an appendix to the dossier and they should not be forwarded for campus-level review unless they offer support for specific claims that otherwise would not be adequately documented. The value of external assessment letters is greatly enhanced by the objectivity and credibility of the author. Care should be taken to avoid relying on persons closely affiliated with the candidate.

Please consider these points:

1. The chair (primary or unit committee chair, dean, or other person specified by department or school procedures) should request and receive these letters.
2. The solicitor should use identical letters of solicitation for all referees, and a copy of the letter that was used should be included in the dossier. If circumstances require different letters (e.g., reviewing different areas of the candidate's work), then copies of all letters used should be included.
3. All letters should be solicited at the same time; specifically, additional letters should not be requested following receipt of a negative evaluation. If additional letters must be sought because a referee declines, the reason should be explained.
4. Letters of solicitation must explicitly mention the candidate's area(s) of excellence. Letters of solicitation for candidates choosing to present a balanced case must include an explanation of Indiana University's policy on the balanced case. **It is extremely important that the proper area of excellence is reflected in the request letter. If the wrong area is indicated, this could result in procedural challenges.**
5. Individual letters must be sent for each candidate; it is inappropriate to solicit external reviews for more than one candidate from a particular external reviewer in the same letter.
6. All letters solicited and received must be included in the dossier; neither the candidate nor subsequent reviewers may exclude letters.
7. Referees should be selected on the basis of their ability to comment on the candidate's professional accomplishments.

8. Referees for professional service, teaching, and some other areas of creative or scholarly work may not necessarily hold academic appointments, but they should be selected on the basis of having an established expertise to evaluate the evidence presented to them. Letters from former students, of course, constitute a special category and should not be used. Academic referees are expected to hold at least the rank for which the candidate is being considered.
9. The dossier should contain a brief statement of professional qualifications for each referee sufficient to establish the authority of the referee in relation to the specific case under review; ordinarily, two or three sentences should suffice. The candidate should not be the person to write the statements of qualification of external reviewers. Academic referees are expected to hold at least the rank to which the candidate aspires.
10. When writing to referees, include the vitae, candidate's statement, and copies of publications, including books, unless you are certain they are available to the referee. In instances in which a referee is asked to read a book-length manuscript, an honorarium should be provided. Include the [External Referee Forms](#) in your request for referees and ask that they complete the form to assure that reviewers meet our "arm's length" criteria.
11. Evaluators should be asked not to make a recommendation on promotion or tenure; they should be asked to evaluate the candidate's work or activities. *They should not be asked to speculate on whether the candidate would receive promotion or tenure at their own institutions.* The purpose for seeking these letters is to obtain an objective peer review of the work, and, hence, they should be phrased in a neutral fashion without any suggestion about the department's likely eventual recommendation.
12. To provide useful information for review beyond the department level, avoid using abbreviations that are not likely to be known to colleagues outside the field.
13. *Special considerations must be given to evaluating creative work (especially when performances or exhibitions are available for a short period of time).* The same degree of objectivity should be maintained in evaluating creative works as in evaluating research. In some cases, it may be necessary to invite external evaluators to campus to view works or performances even though the promotion or tenure review may be several years away.
14. Results of teaching, research and creative activity, or service disseminated through electronic media may be as valuable as results published in print media. The same care and concern for objective peer assessment should be observed when reviewing such electronic publications, especially in light of the move toward more on-line publication venues.
15. While collaborators should ordinarily not be asked to evaluate the quality and importance of shared work, they may be asked to document the extent and nature of the candidate's individual contributions to a team effort. Such letters should be specific about this purpose and not be confused with external assessment letters from peers asked to evaluate the quality and impact of teaching, research and creative activity, and service.
16. Electronic letters of reference are acceptable if they have been verified; however, they should still be signed, dated and on letterhead.