COLLEGE of
ARTS & SCIENCES

File for Action Guidelines
for Rank & Tenure Committees and Department Chairs
2016-2017
(Revised April 2016)

The following guidelines are meant to ensure that faculty actions in the College of Arts and Sciences conform to the highest standards of academic peer review. These guidelines are intended to complement American University's Faculty Manual; the Committee on Faculty Actions' "Guidelines for Submitting Files for Action" (March 2016); and the "College File for Action Guidelines for Tenure-Line Faculty Seeking Reappointment, Tenure or Promotion" (April, 2016). The Manual and CFA guidelines are available from links on the Dean of Academic Affairs’ website. The College guidelines for candidates can be found on the College’s information and policies page. In the case of conflicts between this document and the Faculty Manual, the procedures of the Faculty Manual will apply.

At all stages of the review process, departmental reviewers should **aim for the utmost objectivity and rigor, taking care to analyze both the strengths and the weaknesses in the candidate's file.** Departmental reports should thus reflect a clear-sighted analysis of any concerns that have been expressed in the letters of evaluation, in previous reviews, or that might reasonably be raised at higher levels of review in light of the candidate’s file.

Both the rank and tenure committee and departmental chair should bear in mind that the candidate’s file will subsequently be evaluated by colleagues from other departments and schools, who in most cases will be unfamiliar with the field or subject matter. As a result, departmental reviewers should make every effort to explain the importance of the candidate’s scholarship and teaching to readers outside the candidate’s discipline.

**Checklist**
The first item in any file for action is a checklist to record key dates, such as those on which candidates received specific documents or specific items were placed in the file. You will receive both paper and digital copies of this checklist from Lauren Pav in the College Dean's Office. **To ensure that the review process proceeds smoothly, department and committee chairs must take care to enter these dates in a timely manner.**
Internal Reports
As outlined in the College File for Action Guidelines, all internal reports generated in the current review cycle—including the rank and tenure committee report, the chair’s report and (if applicable) the science rank and tenure committee report—will eventually be placed in section #2 of the candidate’s hard copy file, as well as in a separate digital file labeled “candidate’sname internalletters.pdf.”

In order to assure the confidentiality of all sensitive materials in the file, however, please place the following items in a large manila envelope marked “Confidential” inserted into the front pocket of the candidate’s binder:

- The appendix to the rank and tenure committee report giving the numerical, anonymous results of member’s votes (discussed below);
- All of the original external letters;
- The CVs of all external reviewers;
- Copies of all correspondence with potential reviewers, including those who declined to write;
- A list of all materials sent to the reviewers;
- A signed statement from the individual responsible for redacting the letters stating that redacted versions were given to the candidate.

Please note that, as a department, you are not responsible for placing material in sections #2 and #3 of the candidate’s file for action, either in hard copy or in digital form. Lauren Pav will put the file into the format the CFA requests once all internal review is complete.

Beginning AY 2016-2017, per the CFA guidelines, internal reports will be delivered to candidates via email. In addition, all departments must use the redesigned College Sharepoint site to upload their final internal reports and to send copies of the internal reports to the faculty member under review. Any responses from the faculty member must also be uploaded directly to the College Sharepoint site.

Rank and Tenure Committee Report
The rank and tenure committee’s report should give a clear and concise representation of the candidate’s career to date, addressing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the file. The credibility of the committee’s recommendation ultimately hinges on its ability to analyze the file with the utmost objectivity and care.

It is natural to want to focus on the candidate’s accomplishments at AU. In the case of the candidate’s scholarship, however, you should base your assessment of candidate’s achievements on the aggregate productivity and impact of the work since degree
completion, including (but not limited to) evidence that the candidate has been productive at AU.

The rank and tenure committee chair should circulate a draft of his/her report to all members of the committee prior to submission to the department chair, so as to ensure that any competing views are accurately expressed therein. This step is especially important in the case of files where there is serious disagreement among members of the committee as to the strength of the candidate’s case in one or more areas of review. In the very rare instance where one or more members of the committee find(s) that the committee’s final report does not sufficiently express their views, a minority report may be submitted.

The rank and tenure committee report should include:

Introduction
- Briefly summarize the candidate’s full-time years of service, at American University or elsewhere, including details on leaves taken.
- Summarize the committee’s overall recommendation for or against reappointment, tenure and/or promotion. Please note that:
  - Only tenured faculty members (normally in the unit) are eligible to vote on tenure cases. Normally, only full professors in the unit are eligible to vote on promotion to full professor. (In the case of units with insufficient numbers of tenured professors and/or full professors, the unit’s rank and tenure committee must be approved by the College Dean's Office.).
  - In both promotion and tenure cases, faculty members who vote must have read the file and be present for a discussion prior to voting. Votes are strictly confidential and are recorded so as to be presented in their aggregate with no attribution.
  - Each eligible faculty member will provide a separate positive, negative, or abstaining vote in the categories of teaching, scholarship, and service, and on the overall recommendation. The numerical results of these votes will be tabulated and reported in an appendix to the rank and tenure committee report and placed by the department in the file’s “Confidential” envelope.
  - Unanimous votes, for or against, must not be reported as such.
  - An abstaining vote is simply an abstention. It should not be interpreted as a negative vote.
  - No proxy votes will be accepted.
  - In the interest of fairness, no person shall have more than a single voice or vote in the evaluation of a given faculty member. Normally, members of the Committee on Faculty Actions vote at the level of CFA review.

Past and Present Reviews
- Comment, where useful, on items in memos from previous formal evaluations, from the candidate, the department’s rank and tenure committee, the department’s
chair, the College dean, the Committee on Faculty Actions/Relations, and the Office of Academic Affairs.

- Bear in mind that the CFA pays particular attention to whether candidates have incorporated suggestions made in previous reviews, achieved their stated research objectives and improved their teaching.
- In order to allow departments to mentor their junior faculty in the frankest, most helpful way, however, copies of the annual reviews performed in the faculty member's first, second and fourth years of pre-tenure service are not to be included in files for action.

Scholarship

- Clearly analyze the candidate's major contributions to his or her field of scholarship, with special reference to:
  - The quality and quantity of the candidate's publications, performances and/or productions to date.
  - Any grants on which the candidate was the P.I. or co-PI, as well as the candidate's activities in submitting proposals for external funding;
  - The candidate's other scholarship-related achievements—including prestigious awards and fellowships—and how those achievements benefit the department and/or field.
- In the course of this analysis, provide or discuss citation counts of the candidate's publications and journal impact factors, where available:
  - In fields where citations and impact factors are not a valid means of assessment, please assess the importance of awards won, juried exhibits mounted, performances in prestigious venues, reviews of the candidate's work in important publications, and other significant contributions to the field.
- Other items that should be addressed under scholarship include:
  - The significance of co-authorships or co-presentations and of first or last authorships in the discipline, if applicable.
  - The nature of the candidate's contribution to multi-authored works and performances. Where applicable, discuss the value of a multi-authored work within the discipline and the candidate's contribution thereto.
  - If applicable, the degree of continuity between publications or appearances in public venues (e.g., newspapers, television) and the candidate's primary research focus.
  - Whether citation frequency is important, and if important, the relevant comparison in the department and discipline.
- Address the candidate's next major project (a brief description is sufficient) and how the project is expected to contribute to the candidate's field and to the department

External Evaluators (Review for Tenure and Promotion Files Only)

- Provide a thorough and objective analysis of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses as presented and discussed by the external reviewers. Bear in mind that the recommendation of committees that seek to minimize weaknesses in the
file will not be as persuasive at higher levels of review than that of committees that address these weaknesses squarely:
  
  - Refer to outside evaluators simply as Reviewers A, B, C, D, E or F and give anonymous quotes where appropriate. Do not characterize the reviewer’s field of study and/or home institution in any way.
  - Make every effort to couch your language in such a way as to ensure the anonymity of the reviewers. When in doubt on this point, err in the direction of greater anonymity.

Teaching

- Discuss courses taught, within the department and outside, indicating the mix of undergraduate, graduate, and general education courses.
- Thoroughly evaluate the candidate’s teaching by examining the full range of available evidence, including:
  - The candidate’s student evaluations (SETs) over the course of the review period;
  - Reports (if available) arising out of peer review of the candidate’s teaching;
  - Supervision of independent study, internships, theses and dissertations;
  - Initiatives to encourage student research and awards received by students mentored;
  - New course development;
  - Development of online courses and teaching modalities;
  - Overall quality of syllabi and course materials;
  - Statements of the candidate’s teaching philosophy and pedagogical strategies;
  - Innovative use of classroom formats and/or technologies;
  - Community service components;
  - Any other aspect deemed useful in gauging teaching effectiveness.

Service

- Briefly review the candidate’s service to the department, College and University, bearing in mind that the chair will provide a more thorough review, including a review of the candidate’s service to the profession.

Department Chair’s Report

As in the case of the rank and tenure committee’s report, the chair’s report should give a clear and concise representation of the candidate’s career to date, addressing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the file. The credibility of the chair’s recommendation ultimately hinges on his or her ability to analyze the file with the utmost objectivity and care.

Likewise, the department chair should remember that the file will be evaluated by colleagues from other departments and offices, and should try to educate those outside the department about the importance of the research in the field.
The chair’s report should build on, not repeat, the report of the rank and tenure committee. There is thus no need for the chair to repeat or summarize what is already well documented in the rank and tenure committee report, unless the chair wants to embellish on something stated therein or to disagree with the report’s assertions or conclusions.

The chair’s report should include:

**Introduction**
- Summarize your overall recommendation.
- If you disagree with the judgments of the rank and tenure committee, outline that disagreement here.

**Past and Present Reviews**
- Comment, where useful, on items in memos from previous evaluations, from the candidate, the department’s rank and tenure committee, the department’s chair, the College dean, the Committee on Faculty Actions/Relations, and the Office of Academic Affairs.
- If previous evaluations contain warnings, discuss how these warnings have been addressed by the candidate.
- If the issues behind these warnings remain a concern, give a thorough explanation of how one might expect them to be remedied in the near future.
- Bear in mind that the CFA pays particular attention to whether candidates have incorporated suggestions made in previous reviews, achieved their stated research objectives and improved their teaching.

**Scholarship**
- Discuss the qualitative and quantitative standards of excellence (books, articles, performances, exhibitions, grants, awards, reviews, etc.) in the discipline and/or sub-discipline.
- Put the candidate’s research, scholarship or creative performance into the perspective of the discipline:
  - Address the importance of the candidate’s field within the broader discipline. If useful, give examples of comparable programs.
- Explain how the candidate’s scholarship fits into the department’s strategic vision and how it supports growth in the department, now and in the future. (Note, however, that the candidate must not be penalized if the department’s strategic priorities have shifted since he or she was hired.)
- Provide an assessment of the current and anticipated impact on the field of the candidate’s work.
- Summarize your perception of the vitality and productivity of the scholarly work to date and the anticipated pace of sustained contributions in the future.

*External Evaluators (Review for Tenure and Promotion Files Only)*
• Comment on the candidate's strengths and weaknesses as presented and discussed by the external reviewers and the rank and tenure committee;
  o Refer to outside evaluators simply as Reviewers A, B, C, D, E or F and give anonymous quotes when discussing evaluations. Do not characterize the reviewer's field of study and/or home institution in any way.
  o Make every effort to couch your language in such a way as to ensure the anonymity of the reviewers. When in doubt on this point, err in the direction of greater anonymity.

Teaching
• Comment on the candidate's teaching record over the course of the review period, with special attention to any points where your analysis and evaluation might differ from that of the rank and tenure committee.
• Where evaluations fall below College and/or departmental averages or where the candidate's teaching record raises other significant concerns, please discuss measures taken by the candidate and/or department to improve the candidate's teaching.
• Where no improvement has been demonstrated, please assess the lack thereof.

Service
• Provide a thorough and objective review of:
  o The candidate's service to the department, the college and university;
  o The candidate's service to the professional, academic and/or research organizations constitutive of the profession as a whole.

External Letters

As outlined in the “College File for Action Guidelines for Tenure-Line Faculty Seeking Reappointment, Tenure or Promotion,” letters from academic evaluators external to American University will eventually be placed by the College Dean’s Office in section #3 of the candidate’s hard copy file, as well as in a separate digital file labeled “[candidate’s name external letters].”

The tenure and promotion guidelines of most College departments allow the candidate to view copies of his or her external letters in strictly redacted form.1 It is essential to the integrity of the external review process in those cases that a faculty member in the department—typically the department chair or Rank and Tenure Committee chair—take responsibility for redacting the letters to ensure confidentiality. Section 11c of the Faculty Manual notes that a “strictly redacted letter blocks the identity of the writer, letterhead, revealing statements about the writer's association with the candidate, and all other potentially self-identifying characteristics.” Both the redacted and the original letters must be reviewed by the College Dean's Office before the redacted letters are distributed to the candidate. When all external letters have been received, please send the originals and the proposed redactions each as PDFs to Lauren Pav. Once these

1 Currently, only the Department of Philosophy and Religion mandates closed letters.
have been approved, Lauren will email you the approved copy and is available to upload them to SharePoint for the use in your departmental reviews.

External evaluators of College files for action will receive a $200 honorarium upon submission of their letters. Once the final external letter has been received by the department, the department should contact Christopher Correnti in the College Dean’s Office to arrange for payment of these honoraria.