

March 2014

FROM: Stephen Silvia, Chair, Committee on Faculty Actions  
Mary L. Clark, Interim Dean of Academic Affairs  
TO: American University Colleagues  
RE: Guidelines for Submitting Files for Action

**CFA Schedule for 2014-2015**

**May 2, 2014 12-1pm** Open CFA Meeting

**Aug. 27, 2014 12-1pm** Open CFA Meeting

**Oct. 22, 2014** Deadline for submitting files to the CFA for full University review for all pre-tenure reappointments; and for submitting files for term faculty seeking promotion to the rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Full Professor, to the CFA

**Jan. 14, 2015** Deadline for submitting files for reappointment with tenure to the CFA

**Feb. 18, 2015** Deadline for submitting files for promotion of tenured faculty to the CFA

These guidelines for submitting Files for Action for reappointment, promotion or tenure to the Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA) in 2014-2015 should be read by **candidates, all internal reviewers, and faculty coordinators**. This memo includes **new** information on preparation of the digital files. These guidelines were prepared in accordance with the current [American University Faculty Manual](#). Please also read the Manual carefully.

**1. General Information about the File for Action**

Candidates for reappointment, promotion, or tenure submit their File for Action within their unit, according to the criteria established by their designated teaching unit or academic unit, posted on the [Dean of Academic Affairs' website](#). Internal reviewers evaluate the File for Action following criteria in the Faculty Manual and guidelines in Section 7 of this

letter. Once the file has moved through the appropriate reviews within the unit, the dean or University Librarian will then review, make a recommendation, and send the File forward to the Senate office, for full University review by the CFA and the Dean of Academic Affairs. In cases of tenure and tenure-line promotion, the file then goes to the Provost. In the case of a positive Provost review, a recommendation for tenure and tenure-line promotion is made to the Board of Trustees, which has the final decision making authority.

A File for Action documents the faculty member's development in three areas - teaching, scholarship, and service - as generally defined in the Manual and more specifically defined in the candidate's unit criteria. Files will address, in all three categories, achievements, areas where improvement was made, where there needs to be improvement, plans for growth and development, and projected future outcomes.

Materials in the File for Action, in both digital and hard copy, are concise, meaningful, and clearly related to the candidate's performance or development. The Files for Action will **avoid overwhelming reviewers with extraneous material**, such as multiple syllabi that all convey the

same pedagogy. Narratives provided by the candidate will refer to the unit's criteria for tenure and promotion. The hard copy version of the File for Action, organized as described below, **needs to fit in one three-hole binder with circular rings, which can be handled easily.** Binders must be labeled with candidate's name on the front and the spine. No material is placed in plastic sleeves.

Original scholarly material accompanies the file under separate cover, titled Scholarly Appendix to the File. ("Scholarly" is a term encompassing traditional academic research, creative and professional work.) It is not included with the File for Action, either digitally or in hard copy. If a candidate has a work-in-progress near completion, such as a manuscript, that work is included in the Scholarly Appendix. The academic units themselves provide guidance to candidates on the form in which scholarship/creative/professional work is digitized for the digital version of the Scholarly Appendix, and whether it is submitted in digital form as a link to a resource or as digitized material itself. The CFA encourages candidates to use links and cloud-based services as much as possible.

All reviews, internal and external, are analytic and specific, leading to a recommendation either for or against the action. Reviewers at each level will independently analyze the body of work.

Candidates have a week to reply to each level of review, although they do not need to. Reviewers to whom the candidate is replying do not further comment upon the candidate's reply.

No one but the candidate and/or those who submit written material as part of the established process may include material in a File for Action. Candidates may update information already mentioned as in process in the File for Action, including the candidate's own material if that material has been externally reviewed. Material is eligible if it is new information, if it pertains to an aspect of the file that is already mentioned in it and if such information significantly changes the status of the file in some way (e.g. a book or journal acceptance for an item that was already referenced in the file, or an award or other recognition). All internal parties who have contributed to the file to that point need to be notified of additions, with redacted information if necessary.

The CFA expects all contributors to the file to observe the CFA's deadlines strictly. The CFA does not review incomplete files. Each academic unit provides a checklist, the template for which is prepared annually by the office of the Dean for Academic Affairs, of the material required in a File for Action.

Please note: At any stage of the review, reviewers may and often do request additional information from the candidate, the internal reviewers, and/or external reviewers (via the dean or University Librarian).

## **2. Components of a File for Action for Tenure-Line Reappointment and Tenure or Promotion to Associate Professor**

Files for Action are submitted both in hard copy and digitally. Only one hard copy of the File for Action and the Scholarly Appendix is needed; it will be delivered to the Senate office. The digital files are submitted, both by faculty and staff, to their own unit's Sharepoint Team Site.

## **HARD COPY**

Each File for Action **in hard copy** must have the following elements in the order specified below and labeled with roman numerals, once it appears before the CFA.

### **WHAT THE CANDIDATE WILL DO:**

The candidate will prepare the File in simple and easy-to-read format, tabbed appropriately, with the body of text in 12-point type. The sections will use the Roman numerals below. Any illustrations, graphs, or other aids to understanding the File will be used judiciously, with an eye toward enhancing the reader's understanding. The materials are presented in this order:

I. Table of contents;

II. A single narrative, between 1,500 and 4,500 words long (including footnotes), with the expectation that this narrative will usually be 10-12 pages, on double-spaced pages, using 12-point type and 1-inch margins, including:

- a scholarship section that describes scholarly objectives and goals, including, in some detail and specificity, a discussion of the candidate's future scholarly agenda such as future projects and venues, funding prospects if relevant, and generally trajectory toward the next promotion (note however that substantiating data, including metrics, goes in the scholarship documentation section);
- a teaching section describing teaching philosophy, addressing achievements, charting improvement, and establishing areas of growth;
- and a service section describing engagement with the university community and profession, field, discipline or public life related to scholarly expertise, and referencing unit criteria.

III. Current, dated curriculum vitae. It is up to the individual to provide the appropriate documentation and format for their CV. Page numbers are provided with all publications; professional and creative productions are annotated with basic information on scope of project.

IV. Scholarship documentation section, including information on the significance of publication or distribution venues (including acceptance rates and rank of journals, status and scope of publishers, distributors, galleries, etc.), information on nature of collaboration in co-authored works, relevant peer reviews (such as readers' reviews if work is still unpublished, acceptance by publishers or distributors, published reviews, and if appropriate evidence from relevant citation indices, using the unit's criteria. No original scholarly/professional/creative material is placed here; rather it is presented in the Scholarly Appendix.

V. Teaching documentation section, including evidence of assessment of teaching that goes beyond numerical ratings and provides information that points to the creative aspect of teaching, including syllabi, information on student engagement outside the classroom (e.g. dissertation advising, internship and community-based research supervision, course design and/or, new curricular initiatives), and numerical portions of all student evaluations of teaching or SETs. If any student open-ended comments in SETs for a course are included, all the comments for that course need to be included.

VI. Service documentation section, including any relevant documents associated with service.

VII. Previous Evaluations, if applicable. This section contains a copy of internal recommendations from previous faculty actions including re-appointments arranged from most recent to earliest, with the candidate's responses, as applicable. It does not include annual reviews internal to the academic or teaching unit.

The candidate will also submit separately a Scholarly Appendix; each academic unit provides guidance on how to assemble this.

**WHAT THE DEAN'S OFFICE/UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN WILL DO:**

At the front of the 3-hole binder, as the first tabbed sections, material prepared by the dean's office or the office of the University Librarian will include:

- checklist (this will be the first page in the file).
- where applicable, unredacted (and of course, confidential) versions of external letters with candidate's responses to the redacted versions of these letters, along with copies of relevant correspondence (e.g. soliciting of the letter and acceptance of it), the curricula vitae of the reviewers, and a list of the candidate's materials sent to those reviewers.
- this year's unredacted internal letters, with any responses from the candidate, chronologically with the most recent on top, along with any relevant paperwork such as communication waiving years to tenure

**DIGITAL FORMAT**

For each candidate, the CFA also expects from the candidate and the dean's office or the office of the University Librarian, respectively, digital files that mirror the hard copy files.

**WHAT THE CANDIDATE WILL DO:**

The candidate's digital File for Action is a document set that will replicate the information in the hard copy, except for the table of contents, consisting in digital format of seven files in simple, searchable, linkable PDF format. Use the structure described above in the hard copy section. Use file names in this model: candidatename narrative.pdf; candidatename cv.pdf; candidatename scholarship.pdf; candidatename

teaching.pdf; candidatename service.pdf; candidatename previousevals.pdf; candidatename scholarlyappendix.pdf.

The candidate will upload this material into the unit's Sharepoint Team Site.

#### **WHAT THE DEAN'S OFFICE/UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN WILL DO:**

These digital files simply replicate the material in the hard copy of the file. The files are:

- checklist (it is prepared by the dean's office or the office of the University Librarian); (candidatename checklist.pdf)
- an external letters document set, where applicable:
  - unredacted versions of external letters with candidate's responses; (candidatename external.pdf)
  - copies of relevant correspondence (e.g. soliciting of the letter and acceptance of it) and a list of the candidate's materials sent to those reviewers; (candidatename external correspondence.pdf)
  - the curricula vitae of the reviewers; (prepared by the dean's office or the office of the University Librarian). (candidatename externalcv.pdf)
- this year's internal letters chronologically with the most recent on top, along with any relevant paperwork such as communication waiving years to tenure (candidatename internal.pdf).

### **3. Components of a File for Action for Tenure-Line Faculty Promotion to Full Professor or to Librarian**

Candidates will craft their files with special care to the language in the Faculty Manual defining this position. This File for Action follows the outline and format described in item 2 above, with one difference: only SETs for the previous six years of teaching are needed. External reviewers typically will not have previously evaluated the faculty member, as a file is much stronger with new evaluators.

The File for Action for those seeking promotion after a prior denial of promotion is as complete and detailed as any File for Action being submitted for the first time. For such a file, **new** external letters must be provided from reviewers who have not previously evaluated the candidate.

### **4. Components of a File for Action for Faculty Entering the University at a Tenured or an Associate or Full Professor Level**

The content of these files will depend to some extent on the idiosyncrasies of the individual case, honoring concerns previously expressed by the then-extant Committee for Faculty Relations for flexibility, relevance, transparency and faculty governance. But in general, the CFA expects that the relevant unit will submit a curriculum vitae for the candidate; relevant correspondence from the candidate, e.g. a submission letter explaining interest, experience and credentials; any

internal letters, including a letter from the relevant dean or University Librarian and reporting on off-list reference checks by whichever person or committee was responsible for it; external evaluations, which could include evaluations provided for a recent promotion or evaluations solicited in the process of hiring; and evidence of teaching experience and quality, e.g. student evaluations and syllabi. In an appendix, the unit will also provide examples of scholarly/creative/professional work. The unit will provide a checklist of the materials it is providing; if one of the above-suggested items is missing because it is not relevant, and/or other materials are provided, the unit (perhaps in the dean's or University Librarian's letter) will provide an explanation in both the digital file and hard copy.

## **5. Internal Letters**

The following internal letters at a minimum are required before submission to the CFA; individual unit requirements may mandate more:

- an evaluation from the head of the teaching unit, or equivalent as appropriate to the academic unit;
- an evaluation from any other designated review committee, such as the rank and tenure committee at the teaching/academic unit or a group of senior faculty, as the unit defines (n.b.: The committee names the individual heading or representing, for the purpose of correspondence, the committee in its letter, e.g. "Jane Smith, Chair, Rank and Tenure Committee"; letters from "Rank and Tenure Committee" or "Senior Faculty" are unacceptable);
- an evaluation from the academic unit dean or the University Librarian.

Do not include the annual reviews that are customary in some units..

Letters at the unit level are each independent evaluations of the candidate's performance in research, teaching and service, the candidate's response to problems noted in previous evaluations, areas of needed improvement and growth, and promise of continuing activity in scholarship, teaching and service. The letters will specifically and differently, appropriate to the different levels of review and to the rank being recommended, address the nature and quality of the candidate's research within his/her field and subfields, where appropriate. They will address questions that may arise for non-specialists later reading the file, for instance the meaning of a co-authorship or the prestige-level of a particular grant. They will identify the rank and significance of venues in which the candidate's work has appeared. They will consider the teaching record beyond SETs, and provide context that may help those outside the unit to interpret data.

The letters will address any issues flagged in earlier reviews. Quotations from other letter writers cannot substitute for one's own analysis, though quotations may be included. Any references to outside letters must strictly preserve the anonymity of those reviewers, avoiding even descriptors, since they may in many cases significantly narrow the pool of possible reviewers.

In the case of professional and creative work, letters need to engage not only the substance of

material addressed but also the aesthetic and craft decisions chosen by the candidate, and the way in which those choices locate and position the candidate within their field.

The dean's or University Librarian's evaluation will provide an evaluation of the candidate's performance and role within the unit and university and their field, and indicate where he or she agrees or disagrees with unit reviewers and why.

## **6. Vote count**

Within the unit, a secret-ballot vote count (yes, no, abstain) by some or all tenured faculty is required separately for each of the criteria of research, teaching and service, and overall results as well as tallies will be included at the end of the appropriate internal review letter or in an attached letter (in its electronic form, within the same digital file). This vote is taken after review of material and an in-person, phone or Skype (or its equivalent) discussion; no proxy votes are accepted. No person has more than a single vote in the process of evaluation of a faculty member. The numerical results of this vote, along with an explanation for the issues resulting in any significant divided vote, are included in the appropriate unredacted internal letter. The letter, or letters, in the case of intransigent disagreement needs to explain what issues were raised by the faculty members who voted. Voting faculty are expected to raise issues in the discussion that would explain the existence of dissenting votes. Abstentions should be a rare exception. Abstentions cannot be used to signal that the voter did not read the material.

## **7. Outside letters**

A minimum of five outside letters is required in the Files for Action for candidates seeking reappointment with tenure and/or promotion. All solicited letters that are received must be included. Candidates submitting Files for Action do not solicit letters for their own files. The majority of reviewers' names is suggested by the teaching unit chair or designated committee, not by the candidate. Each candidate decides, in conjunction with their unit, how much of the candidate's work is relevant to put forward to the reviewer. In general reviewers expect to read a strong representative sample of the work, not everything on the curriculum vitae.

External reviewers are nationally or internationally respected individuals whose area of expertise qualifies them to speak with authority about the candidate and whose professional and personal relationship with the candidate is such that the external reviewers can provide an objective review. Customarily, the majority of these letters is from faculty members, typically full professors, who are affiliated with highly regarded institutions. In most cases, and appropriately to the discipline, at least two of the letters should come from someone outside the narrower niche within which the scholar works, who can provide assurance that the work rests on a solid foundation underlying the narrow area and meets the standards of the field or profession.

The identity of external letter writers remains confidential before, during, and after the review process. Teaching units decide whether external letters are completely closed to the candidate or strictly redacted, such that potential identifying characteristics of the author are removed. Those soliciting outside evaluation letters for promotion and tenure will consider the following,

and so properly inform outside reviewers, in order to minimize the hazard of having letters rejected or reviewers requested for further information:

- The reviewer's objectivity must be credible. Some kinds of relationships are not credible on the face. These include a candidate's former professor, a thesis or dissertation advisor or committee member, co-author, co-editor or personal friend as opposed to professional colleague. All these people can confidently be expected to have an investment in the person's success. A professional colleague is acceptable to the degree that the external reviewer can establish in the letter that he/she can exercise objectivity in an evaluation of the candidate's work. Formal relationships in themselves do not always determine whether or not a letter writer is too close to the candidate for objectivity. In that case, a writer may need to address the nature of the relationship with some specificity, giving consideration to the need for readers to understand how their judgment can be objective.
- This is a task of evaluation, grounded in analysis of scholarship/professional/creative work; a recommendation either for or against the candidate's action, based in this evaluation, will conclude the evaluation. The reviewers will provide a context for the discussion of the candidate's work, to aid those who are not expert in the field, and analyze the specific work.
- Outside letters explicitly address the specific criteria associated with the rank. The letter writer must be given a copy of unit guidelines as well as faculty manual language on tenure expectations.

A template for a request letter to outside reviewers is available from the AU portal ([myau.american.edu](http://myau.american.edu)), on the Academics/Dean of Academic Affairs' page, under "Tenure Track Faculty Re-appointments."

#### 8. Communications in the File for Action review process

At each level of review, copies of the review letter will be sent to the candidate and to all earlier reviewers. These letters will be delivered both in hard copy and (properly limited) in the unit's Sharepoint site. For all vote counts, including that of the Committee on Faculty Actions, the numerical results are redacted for all previous reviewers and for the candidate.

All responses to review letters are submitted both in hard copy and via Sharepoint, never in email. All responses are cc'd and sent to previous reviewers/reviewing bodies as well.

In extraordinary circumstances, and with knowledge that doing so will delay the process, a reviewing body may ask for substantial new information, e.g. book chapters in manuscript or revised or new external letters. If a reviewing body requests such information, earlier reviewers must also be given an opportunity to review and comment upon that work, if necessary revising their earlier judgments and if relevant taking a new vote only as they are directly affected by that new material.