

MEMORANDUM

Updated version, May 13, 2011

TO: American University Colleagues

FROM: Patricia Aufderheide, Chair, Committee on Faculty Actions

RE: Guidelines for Submitting Files for Action

CFA Schedule for 2011-2012

Aug 31, 2011 Open CFA Meeting

Oct. 31, 2011 Deadline for submitting files to the CFA for full University review for all pre-tenure reappointments

Nov 14, 2011 Deadline for submitting files for term faculty seeking promotion to the rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Full Professor, to the CFA

January 16, 2012 Deadline for submitting files for reappointment with tenure to the CFA

Feb 27, 2012 Deadline for submitting files for promotion of tenured faculty to the CFA, including promotion to ranks of University Professor and Distinguished Professor

These guidelines for submitting Files for Action for reappointment, promotion or tenure to the Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA) in 2011-2012 should be read by **candidates, all internal reviewers, and faculty coordinators**. This memo includes **new** information on preparation of the digital files. The CFA expects that all files will be received digitally as well as in hard copy. The memo also includes **new** information on soliciting and reviewing external letters.

These guidelines were prepared in accordance with the revised 2010 [American University Faculty Manual](#). Please also read the Manual carefully.

1. General Information about the File for Action

Candidates for reappointment, promotion, or tenure must 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 will evaluate the File for Action following criteria in the Faculty Manual and guidelines in Section 6 of this letter. Once the file has moved through the appropriate reviews within the unit, the dean will then review, make a recommendation, and send the File forward 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.

A File for Action documents the faculty member's development in each of the 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 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 File for Action, organized as described below, **needs to fit in one three-hole binder with circular rings, which can be handled easily**. No material is placed in plastic sleeves. Original scholarly (a term that includes professional/creative) material accompanies the file separately in hard copy; if a candidate has a work-in-progress near completion, such as a manuscript, that work is included.

All reviews, internal and external, are analytic and specific. They are all grounded evaluations, although an analytic evaluation will lead to a recommendation either for or against the action. Each level of reviewer will independently analyze the body of work.

Candidates have a week to reply to each level of review. Candidates are responsible for updating their files, and are highly encouraged to do so. No one but the candidate and those who submit written material as part of the established process may include material in a File for Action.

The CFA expects all contributors to the file to observe the CFA's deadlines strictly. The CFA does not review incomplete files, and returns such files to the appropriate dean. 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.

2. Components of a File for Action for Tenure-Line Reappointment, Tenure, or Promotion

Files for Action are submitted both in hard copy and digitally. Note that in the case of tenure and promotion files, a separate and duplicate hard copy of the file goes to the Dean of Academic Affairs, at the same time that the original hard copy is delivered to the CFA. As well, in tenure- and promotion files, digital files should be sent both to the CFA and to the DAA.

HARD COPY

Each File for Action **in hard copy** must have the following elements in the order specified below, once it appears before the CFA:

At the front of the 3-hole binder, separate envelopes prepared by the dean's office will include:

- summary of vote (but NOT individual tallies) of the rank and tenure committee or senior faculty, with description of issues raised to explain the basis on which votes were made;
- internal letters with any responses from the candidate;
- where applicable, unredacted versions of external letters with candidate's responses, along with copies of correspondence, the curricula vitae of the reviewers, and a list of materials sent to those reviewers.

- Checklist.

The candidate will prepare the file in simple and easy-to-read format, tabbed appropriately, with the body of text in 12-point type, in this order:

I. Table of contents

II. Introductory narrative, providing overview of achievements, areas where improvement was made, where there needs to be improvement, plans for growth and development, and projected future outcomes, referencing unit criteria.

III. Current, dated curriculum vitae, in categories (for example, refereed journal articles, book chapters, papers in proceedings, books, and monographs, etc.) with the most recent works and other accomplishments first. If work was jointly produced, e.g. co-authored texts, note the candidate's role and responsibility. Page numbers are provided with all publications; professional and creative productions are annotated with basic information on scope of project.

IV. Scholarship section, including a narrative that describes scholarly objectives and goals, information on the significance of venues (including acceptance rates and rank of journals, status and scope of publishers and distributors) and relevant peer reviews (including readers' reviews, acceptance by publishers or distributors, published reviews, and if appropriate evidence from relevant citation indices), using the unit's criteria.

V. Teaching section, including a narrative describing teaching philosophy, addressing achievements, charting improvement, and establishing areas of growth; followed by evidence permitting assessment 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, internship and community-based research supervision, course design and/or, new curricular initiatives), and 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 section, including a narrative describing engagement with the university community and profession, field, discipline or public life related to scholarly expertise, and any relevant associated documents.

VII. Previous Evaluations. This section contains a copy of all internal recommendations from previous faculty actions including re-appointments arranged from most recent to earliest, with the candidate's responses.

DIGITAL FORMAT

For each candidate, the CFA also expects from the candidate and the dean's office, respectively, at least **three** and possibly **four digital files in PDF format**.

N.b.: The candidate's digital File for Action should have a **table of contents and tabs, in PDF format**. If the candidate chooses not to use tabs, he or she must paginate the file and include the page numbers in the table of contents. These three or four digital files simply replicate the material in the hard copy of the file.

The files are:

- Internal letters with responses, as well as a vote tally with a summary of issues raised to explain the basis on which the votes were made (prepared by dean's office)
- where applicable, unredacted versions of external letters with responses, along with copies of the unit's correspondence with reviewer, the curricula vitae of the reviewers, and a list of materials sent to those reviewers (prepared by dean's office)
- Checklist (prepared by dean's office)
- Candidate's file for action (prepared by candidate)

Each file is named following the format: Candidate name, Type of file, Date, thus:

Jane Smith, Tenure File for Action, 2012
Jane Smith, Internal Letters, 2012
Jane Smith, External Letters, 2012
Jane Smith, Checklist, 2012

Additional material is labeled appropriately, e.g.

Jane Smith, Addition 1, 2012
Jane Smith, Addition 2, 2012

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

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. External reviewers typically will not have previously evaluated the faculty member.

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 Tenure-Line Faculty Promotion to University Professor

This section is written pending Senate action on this distinction. Please consult the Senate chair before proceeding.

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. As well, a letter of nomination from a full professor at American University and two letters from full professors at American University supporting the nomination, none of whom are part of the internal review for the File, are included in the envelope (hard copy)/digital file, along with internal letters. External reviewers usually will not have previously evaluated the faculty member. Their letters need to refer to the specific criteria defining this position in the Faculty Manual.

Because internal and external reviewers of the File are asked to evaluate the candidate's scholarly achievements as highly significant, transcending a single discipline or field of study, internal reviews of the File may include more than one teaching unit or more than one academic unit. In this case, the chair or dean of the candidate's primary unit will coordinate the internal review with any other units that should be involved in the review.

Often, for candidates for this position, considerable time has passed since their last institution-wide review. The CFA expects to see only the last few years--usually six--specifically addressed with documentation, although the candidate will provide an overview of the arc of career achievement in each area within the narrative provided.

5. Components of a File for Action for Tenure-Line Faculty Promotion to Distinguished Professor

This section is written pending Senate action on this distinction. Please consult the Senate chair before proceeding.

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. As well, a letter of nomination from a full professor of the American University faculty and two letters from full professors at American University supporting the nomination, none of whom are part of the internal review for the File, are included in the envelope (hard copy)/digital file, along with internal letters. External reviewers generally should not have previously evaluated the faculty member. Their letters need to refer to the specific criteria defining this position in the Faculty Manual.

Often, for candidates for this position, considerable time has passed since their last institution-wide review. The CFA expects to see only the last few years--usually six--specifically addressed with documentation, although the candidate will provide an overview of the arc of career achievement in each area within the narrative provided.

The process for internal review of Distinguished Professor is distinctive, in that a negative review at any level stops the action.

6. Internal Letters

The following internal letters are required before submission to the CFA:

- an evaluation from the chair of the teaching unit;
- an evaluation from any other designated review committee, such as the rank and tenure committee at the teaching/academic unit, as the unit defines. (N.b.:The committee specifies the individual heading the committee in its letter, e.g. “Jane Smith, Chair, Rank and Tenure Committee”; letters from “Rank and Tenure Committee” are unacceptable.);
- an evaluation from the academic unit dean.

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 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 beyond 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 will preserve the anonymity of those 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 evaluation will provide an evaluation of the candidate’s performance and role within the School and their field over time, and indicate where the dean agrees or disagrees with unit reviewers and why.

7. Vote count

A secret-ballot, confidential vote count (yes, no, abstain) by tenured faculty is required separately for the criteria of research, teaching and service. This vote is taken after review of material and an in-person discussion; no proxy votes are accepted. No person has more than a single vote in the process of evaluation of a faculty member.

8. Outside letters.

A minimum of five outside letters is required in the Files for Action for candidates seeking reappointments with tenure 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 unit decides how much of the candidate’s work is relevant to put forward to the reviewer.

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. At least two of the letters should come from someone outside the narrower niche within which the scholar works, who can speak to the role of the scholar's work within the wider discipline.

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. 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.

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 thesis or dissertation advisor, 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.

A template for a request letter to outside reviewers is available from the AU portal, on the Academics/Dean of Academic Affairs' page, under "Tenure Track Faculty Re-appointments."