
Overview

A key part of the promotion and tenure (P&T) review process involves the solicitation of evaluation letters from external reviewers - referred to as “reviewers.” These evaluation letters provide a crucial and unbiased reflection and assessment of the standing and impact of the candidate in their field of study.

The process is initiated each year in early February (and no later than March 1st) with a letter sent from the dean’s office to the chair/director of the primary unit for each candidate who will undergo the P&T process for that year (a copy will also go to the chair/director of other units in which in the faculty member also has an official appointment, e.g., joint appointment). Units may contact the dean’s office before this letter is sent if they wish to begin the process earlier.

At the unit level, the process will be led by the primary unit’s chair/director or the chair of the unit’s P&T committee (depending on the policy of that unit) – referred to as the “chair/director or P&T chair.” The unit in which a candidate being considered for promotion and/or tenure is referred to as the “primary unit.” Any other unit(s) in which a candidate has a joint appointment is/are referred to as the “secondary unit(s).”

Timeline and Key Details

Step 1: Identification of reviewers

The identification of reviewers requires two separate lists. The candidate creates their list first and sends the completed list to the chair/director or P&T chair. Once the candidate list is received, the unit creates their list; this ordering prevents the same name from appearing on both lists.

In most cases, the initial unit and candidate lists include six (6) names; however, in some cases particularly in which reviewer commitments may be challenging to secure, the unit and candidate may agree at the start of the process to provide initial lists with a number of reviewers greater than six (6). The exact number chosen is up to the candidate and the unit but must be identical in both lists (see below for further details).

Candidate list of reviewers:

- The chair/director or P&T chair of the candidate’s primary unit shall ask the candidate to provide a ranked list of potential reviewers including contact information. The list must include six (6) potential reviewers unless a greater number was agreed upon at the start of the process, in which case the ranked list must include the agreed upon number of potential reviewers. As noted above, the number of reviewers in the candidate list must be identical to the number in the unit list.

- The candidate may seek guidance from internal or external experts to create their list, but they must not initiate contact with potential reviewers, including efforts to determine if a
The candidate would be willing to be contacted and/or provide an evaluation letter. The candidate can consult with colleagues at KU including their promotion and tenure committee about possible names for their list; however, candidates must not ask anyone including members of their promotion and tenure committee about the likely composition of the unit’s list of reviewers prior to the candidate’s list being composed or about the actual composition of the unit list after it is composed.

- The candidate may supply the names of no more than two (2) individuals who should not be contacted for a review; no explanation is required.

**Unit list of reviewers:**

- The chair/director or P&T chair of the candidate’s primary unit shall compile an additional ranked list of potential reviewers. As noted above, the list must include six (6) potential reviewers unless a greater number was agreed upon at the start of the process, in which case the ranked list must include the agreed upon number of potential reviewers. As noted above, the number of reviewers in the unit list must be identical to the number in the candidate list.

- In the case of a candidate on a joint appointment, only one set of reviewers should be generated and eventually approved by the Dean’s Office. The primary unit is responsible for all aspects of the process, but should consult with the chair(s)/director(s) and/or P&T chair(s) of the secondary unit(s) regarding the selection of reviewers. If all agree, the units may work together in creating the list.

- The unit list must not include any names that appear in the candidate list of reviewers or their “do not contact list.” Beyond use of the candidate list of reviewers and the “do not contact list,” the unit’s selection of reviewers must be done without consulting the candidate; however, other internal or external experts can be consulted to ensure the most appropriate list.

**Step 2: Submission of reviewer list**

The list of twelve (12) reviewers [six (6) from the candidate and six (6) from the unit] shall be provided to the dean’s office for review no later than April 15th. Units are welcome to submit their lists earlier than the April 15th deadline and may also include lists longer than 12 (with the requirement that the number from the candidate and the unit is the same); both strategies may be particularly useful in cases in which targeted reviewers are likely to receive many other requests. Each list should be prioritized in the order in which each reviewer will be contacted.

- For all reviewers listed, the unit generates a 1-2 paragraph statement of appropriateness of the reviewer for evaluating this candidate. This statement of appropriateness must include current appointment and contact information, field of study (with an explanation of relevance if different from that of the candidate), scholarly and/or creative accomplishments, and other indicators of the standing, reputation, and impact in their field of study. The strength of this statement will be particularly important in cases where the reviewer is below the rank of professor, employed outside of academia, or at an institution not generally considered as a peer or aspirational peer of the University of Kansas in that field of study.
- The candidate is not informed of the final selection for referees and will not have access to the obtained evaluation letters (see confidentiality statement below).

A response to the list will be provided from the dean’s office within 14 calendar days. In the case that a reviewer is deemed unacceptable, a rationale will be provided and additional names will be requested until two lists of at least six (6) reviewers are approved. This final approval of both lists must be completed within an additional 14 calendar days and no later than May 15th. If any of the above dates fall on a weekend or holiday, the deadline will be the next business day.

**Step 3: Inviting reviewers and securing commitments**

Following approval of the list of reviewers, the top three (3) names from each list are contacted by email by the chair/director or P&T chair and invited to provide an evaluation letter. A request must be made to the dean’s office if a change in the order is desired. There should be no more than six (6) requests active at any one time (see below for details). The unit has the option to include a more formal invitation letter as an attachment, but a more formal invitation letter isn’t required if the items outlined below are addressed in the body of the email.

The invitation must request that the reviewer accept or decline the invitation within seven (7) days and must also inform the reviewer of the deadline for receipt of the evaluation letter if the invitation is accepted. This latter deadline is up to the discretion of the chair/director or P&T chair and may be shortened to accommodate deadlines at later stages of the process, but consistency across years is important to preserve equity and fairness in the process across candidates.

The invitation must include the points below:

- The invitation must identify the candidate, unit(s) in which the candidate is under consideration, and specifies the level of promotion (e.g., assistant to associate professor with tenure).
- The invitation must include the candidate’s CV and a copy of the unit’s standards for P&T as attachments.
- The invitation may include attachments chosen by the candidate that represent their work (e.g., representative journal articles) and/or indicate materials that will be provided to the reviewer in another manner (e.g., provision of a book through postal mail or access to a creative work with a web link). The candidate may seek guidance from members of their P&T committee in selecting materials that best reflect their work.
- The invitation must include the College Confidentiality Statement: "As a part of the promotion and/or tenure review process, we are soliciting assessments of Professor _____’s research contributions from academic colleagues and distinguished professionals. These letters will become part of the candidate’s promotion and tenure dossier and are treated as confidential by the University to the extent we are permitted to do so by law."
- The invitation must indicate the dates of any approved leave(s) or approved reduction(s) in appointment [e.g., any leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)]
including that related to birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child] during the period since appointment to the candidate’s current rank. Reviewers must be directed to not consider any period of time approved for leave (as well as any stoppage of the promotion and tenure clock) in their evaluation of the candidate’s record and accomplishments, and to allow for a reasonable period for the candidate to re-establish scholarly output following leaves. Note: This section does not apply to leaves granted to facilitate professional development including research and/or teaching fellowships.

- In the case of promotion from the rank of associate professor to the rank of professor, the invitation must specify the candidate’s date of appointment to associate professor and shall direct reviewers to focus their evaluation letter on accomplishments that have occurred since the appointment to associate professor. Accomplishments that occurred at another institution should be included in this focus if they occurred after the date of appointment to associate professor. Accomplishments prior to the appointment to associate professor should be considered and discussed as part of a larger body of sustained productivity, but cannot be the primary basis for a positive evaluation. Possible language: “We ask that you provide a clear evaluation specific to the scholarship and/or creative works in the period under consideration since appointment to associate professor from mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy, although you should feel free to consider and discuss work that has occurred prior to this period as it relates to the scholarly (and/or creative) productivity, reputation and impact of the candidate.”

- In the event that the candidate has scholarly and/or creative works in a language other than English, the invitation may ask the reviewer to provide guidance, if able, that could benefit individuals who are not able to evaluate these materials based on the language in which they appear.

The invitation also must request the reviewer’s CV and direct the reviewer to address a series of key questions including:

a) The length and capacity of the reviewer’s familiarity with the candidate, addressing any potential conflicts or biases;

b) The quality of the candidate's work as reflected in the CV and materials provided for the reviewer’s evaluation;

c) The significance of the candidate's work to the relevant discipline(s) and/or profession(s);

d) The pattern of productivity reflected in the candidate's record, and the extent to which the candidate’s record reflects a sustainable program of scholarly and/or creative activities;

e) The level of state, regional, national and/or international stature of the candidate as a result of their body of work;

f) Any special distinction(s) achieved by the candidate;

g) An assessment of the candidate’s contributions in their area of scholarship and/or creative work as compared to that of others at a similar stage in their careers, as
well as the extent to which the reviewer believes the candidate meets the standards for promotion and tenure as indicated in the unit procedures provided.

Note: Some units may prefer and are permitted to utilize a two-step process for inviting reviewers and securing commitments, beginning with an invitation email that provides more limited information (e.g., a CV but not reprints). Reviewers who agree to provide an evaluation letter would then be sent a second email that provides the remaining detail and resources to the reviewer.

Step 4. Contacting new reviewers

If any of the selected reviewers decline the invitation to provide an evaluation or accept but then subsequently withdraw their offer to provide a review, the next approved reviewer on the list is contacted until the full number of required reviewers is reached. As noted above, a request must be made to the dean’s office if a change in the order is desired. Also noted above, there should be no more than six (6) requests active at any one time. If a potential reviewer fails to respond positively within seven (7) days, the chair/director or chair of the P&T committee has the option (but is not required) to proceed to the next name on the approved list. In this case, the chair/director or chair of the P&T committee must immediately contact the nonresponsive reviewer and indicate that their evaluation letter is no longer required. The unit shall maintain copies of all mail and/or e-mail solicitation communications with reviewers and the reviewer’s CV.

In some cases, the list of names from the unit and/or the candidate list will be exhausted before six (6) commitments have been obtained. When this event occurs, a list of at least three (3) additional reviewers must be generated by the candidate and/or the unit depending on the list that was exhausted. At this stage, it is possible that one of the candidate’s new selections could be a current alternate on the unit list. In this case, that name will remain on both lists and be used in whichever list his/her name comes up first and then removed from the other list. New selections for the unit should not include a name already on the candidate list. The remainder of the procedure must follow the steps outlined above (with the exception of the deadline dates).

Step 5. Concluding the process

The process will continue until at least six (6) evaluation letters are secured (three (3) each from the unit’s list and the candidate’s list). The following materials must be submitted as part of the candidate’s dossier:

- A list including the name of each reviewer contacted, the statement of appropriateness for each, and results from each contact including the date (e.g., declined on mm/dd/yyyy; no response to second email sent on mm/dd/yyyy), if the reviewer never responded, and the reason provided (if any) for a declination.

- It is possible that a reviewer who declines an invitation or is nonresponsive past the seven (7) day deadline may nonetheless submit an evaluation letter, resulting in the receipt of seven (7) or more evaluation letters. All evaluation letters beyond six (6) that arrive by
the deadline for submission of the candidate’s completed dossier to the unit must be included in the candidate’s dossier. If additional evaluation letters [beyond six (6)] arrive after the deadline, they should be discarded (shredded) without reading.

**Requirements and Exceptions for External Reviewers**

Reviewers must meet the requirements for selection as outlined below:

1) A Reviewer must be established as a major contributor in a field relevant to the candidate’s scholarship and/or creative works with a level of experience and accomplishment that allows for a rigorous review. Exceptions will not be granted.

2) For promotion (and tenure) to associate professor, a reviewer must hold the academic rank of associate professor or professor (including professor emeritus throughout this document) and at least 50% of the reviewers in the initial list from both the unit and the candidate must be at the rank of professor. Exceptions will only be made in well-documented cases where there is an insufficient number or lack of diversity of experts in that field of study at the rank of professor to reach the 50% threshold indicated in the initial lists. For promotion to professor, all reviewers must be at the rank of professor. Exceptions will only be made in well-documented cases where there is an insufficient number or lack of diversity of experts in that field of study at this rank. For both promotion levels, individuals who are not at an academic institution (e.g., in industry or a research foundation), and therefore do not hold the academic ranks listed above, will be considered in cases where a clear case can be made in line with Requirement #1 above.

3) Hold an academic appointment at an institution generally considered as a peer or aspirational peer of the University of Kansas in that field of study. Exceptions will only be made based on evidence provided in the statement of reviewer appropriateness that indicates: a) the unit(s) within the institution that the reviewer is appointed has comparable or more rigorous standards for faculty productivity and promotion than the unit(s) at KU in which the candidate is appointed; and/or b) the reviewer has established a distinguished career that would place that individual (nationally and internationally) among the top scholars and/or creative artists in their field of study.

4) Must have neither the existence nor the appearance of a conflict of interest that would call into question the unbiased nature of the evaluation. Reviewers must not include:
   a) Direct supervisors or mentors in any official capacity (including committee members for milestone projects) at any stage of the candidate’s training;
   b) Anyone the candidate has directly supervised or mentored in any official capacity (including committee members for milestone projects) at any stage of the reviewer’s training;
   c) Individuals who have held a tenure track position in the same unit (full or partial appointment) as the candidate with any temporal overlap at any point in the career of the candidate;
d) Co-author or co-editorship on any publication (book or journal article), creative work, or grant application at any point in the career of the applicant;

e) Family (through birth, adoption, or marriage) or past/current romantic involvement.

In the case of Requirement #4d, exceptions will only be considered in cases where a clear argument can be made that the connection between the candidate and the reviewer presents no real or perceived conflict of interest.

Please note, the College has identified several relationships that do not represent a conflict and in no way can be used to eliminate a potential reviewer from consideration. These include:

- Co-authors on a manuscript with an extremely large number of authors (including but not limited to position papers from professional organizations and mega-multi-authored research reports) in which there was negligible contact and/or mentoring between the candidate and the potential reviewer;
- Co-presenters in a research symposium, panel, or exhibition;
- Editor/chapter contributor relationship, Series editor/volume editor relationship, or authorship on separate chapters in an edited book (co-editorship would be a conflict);
- An editor/board member (or board membership for both) relationship on a journal editorial board;
- A reviewer/contributor relationship on a creative work

If the candidate is unsure about a conflict, they should consult with their chair/director or P&T chair. If the candidate chooses to go forward with the inclusion of that individual on their list, the potential issue should be addressed when they provide the name and contact information of that reviewer. In some cases, a conflict of interest is determined after an evaluation letter has been solicited. In this case, the evaluation letter must be included and the nature of the conflict must be clearly stated in the materials forwarded for subsequent stages of review.