

For Promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure, Solicitation of External Reviews, Template – enclosures include CV; selected publications follow upon confirmation of reviewer participation. Do not use this template for cases of promotion to Professor. A separate template is available for that purpose.

This template is a guide. You may customize it, but (1) you must cover the main points expressed in this template, (2) you may not deviate from the standards specified in the contract, and (3) you must include the section on confidentiality.

Prof. [name]
[Title]
[Department name]
[University]
[City, State, Zip]

Subject: Request for Service as an External Reviewer

Dear Professor [name]:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of [name] in the [College/School] of [name] to ask whether you could assist us in the evaluation of [name of faculty candidate], who is being considered for promotion to the rank of **associate professor with tenure**. My colleagues and I recognize that this request adds to what is no doubt a considerable workload and appreciate your willingness to consider it. UMass is eager to continue building a campus that is widely recognized for the highest quality research, teaching, and service, and we depend on knowledgeable experts to help us understand the contributions of our candidates.

If you are able to accept this invitation, we would appreciate receiving a candid evaluation of Professor [last name]'s [scholarly or creative] contributions. We would like to receive your assessment of the originality and impact of the candidate's work. Has it contributed to new lines of research or deepened our understanding of existing debates? Has the candidate demonstrated a meaningful and independent scholarly program? Is the candidate recognized as an intellectual leader on par with, if not exceeding, the influence and noteworthy accomplishments of peers who are at the same stage of professional development? For candidates in the creative, visual, and performing arts, has she/he had an impact within the field, reflecting recognition and respect among other professionals (and, where applicable, scholars) nationally or beyond?

Because tenure is a permanent status, we are particularly interested in your assessment of Professor [last name]'s trajectory. Do you see evidence that [he/she] has established and is likely to sustain a high profile in the field? Will [he/she] continue to move in innovative directions? Our institution values service to the profession and to the campus, as well as high quality teaching. If you are familiar with Professor [last name's] record in either domain, we would be grateful for your evaluation in these domains. In all of these respects – research, teaching and service – it would be helpful for us to understand the basis for your conclusions; what do you see in the work or record that leads you to the assessment you have provided?

In keeping with standard practice, the faculty and administrators involved in this promotion and tenure process will have read the file carefully and will be well acquainted with the substance of the work involved. Accordingly, we do not need to trouble you with a summary description of the work you are reviewing. Our primary interest is in your professional opinion of the value of [his/her] work and hence the task is primarily evaluative.

As is true of all universities, we have a standard period of probation before a review of this kind commences. Please note that some candidates receive extensions under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement between the University and the Massachusetts Society of Professors, our faculty union. These extensions are granted only for good cause and hence nothing should be inferred from them. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, all pre-tenure candidates were granted the option of a one-year tenure delay as a matter of right. Candidates should be held to the same standard you expect for a typical probationary period.

Beginning in the Spring 2020 semester, faculty across the University experienced a significant disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Spring 2020, as a result of the health crisis, all faculty moved their courses online, research facilities including labs and libraries were closed and all student evaluation of teaching was suspended. In conjunction with the disruptions experienced on-campus, many faculty were working out of their homes while simultaneously providing childcare due to closures of daycare facilities and K-12 schooling. Research disruptions, significant shifts in teaching modalities, limited childcare, and remote work persisted into the summer of 2020. We ask that you take this unprecedented event into consideration when evaluating work performed during the Spring and Summer periods of 2020.

When we present the files of our candidates for associate professor with tenure, we are obliged to attach a curriculum vitae for each reviewer, mainly because scholars who are outside the field will be interested in the work for which you are known and hence the starting point of your evaluation.

Candidates for promotion and tenure have the options of waiving or retaining the right of access to external review letters. In this case, Professor [last name] [has or has not] waived [his/her] access to all external review letters. However, under our contract with the faculty union, we must identify all reviewers. Therefore, while internal faculty and administrative evaluators of the file will have access to your letter, it will otherwise remain confidential (to the extent allowed by law). The candidate will know that you have provided an evaluation [but will not have / and will have] access to your letter.

If you are able to accept this invitation, we would be grateful if you would complete and then return the attached disclosure form indicating the extent of your relationship with Professor [last name], if any. We would appreciate knowing whether you have collaborated with or had previous professional or personal interactions with the candidate. Should you believe that there is any room for misunderstanding or a potential conflict of interest in reviewing this case, please feel free to call me before you proceed.

I have attached a copy of Professor [last name]'s CV for your information. If you are able to accept this invitation, we will send you a few selected publications. As our evaluations proceed along an established time line, we would be most appreciative if you would, first, let me know by email [department chair's email] if you can accept this assignment within the next week and, second, provide your letter and CV by [four weeks after the date of the request]. I will forward the publications to you as soon as I receive your email confirmation.

Again, I respect the fact that this request imposes on your time. It is an essential part of the review process, as you know of course, and we do depend on our colleagues to help us make wise decisions.

Sincerely,

[Name of Department Chair]
[Title]