

ADVICE FOR CHAIRS FROM COMMITTEE ON RANK AND TENURE

These are some issues that arose during the Rank and Tenure process in 2019-2020.

**External Evaluators**

According to the Faculty Handbook, an application for promotion will “normally” include five external review letters, though the application is considered complete if at least three arrive by the submission deadline. Three letters are fine if they all provide a useful and unbiased analysis of the candidate’s scholarship/creative work. However, it is not uncommon for one or more letters to be less useful, either because they do not provide much useful analysis, or because the reviewer’s relationship with the candidate was closer than desirable. While it is not possible to control what an external reviewer will write, the CRT believes the Chairs can:

- Continue to work to secure at least 5 external reviewers, as a cushion against those who do not submit letters in a timely fashion, or provide letters that do not usefully evaluate the candidate.
- Try to ensure reviewers do not have a personal connection with the candidate that would create a conflict of interest (beyond the usual social and professional encounters at professional meetings). When the Chair sends the initial request for an external evaluation, it would be a good practice at that time to inquire what previous relationship the evaluator has with the candidate. If it is too close, the Chair can move on to a different evaluator.
- Provide additional rationale in the event that there is an important reason to include a reviewer who may be viewed as having a conflict of interest, and be sure there are at least three others who do not present such a conflict.
- Provide additional rationale in the event that multiple letters come from scholars working in other disciplines. This may be appropriate, especially for candidates working in interdisciplinary fields, but again merits a rationale on the part of the Chair.
- To aid the CRT, it would be helpful to include in the file a sample of the letter sent to the external reviewers, so the CRT can see exactly what instructions were given to the reviewers.

**Departmental Summaries**

The summary of the departmental discussion is one of the most important elements of the candidate’s file. The candidate’s colleagues in the Department are the best situated to evaluate the candidate’s teaching, advising, scholarship/creative work and service with regards to the Departmental Standards.

- While the external reviews are important for evaluating a candidate’s scholarship and/or creative work, it is equally important for the Department

- to interpret those reviews in the context of LMU, and to provide its own assessment of whether the scholarship meets the Department Standards.
- If there is language in the Departmental Standards regarding expectations for future productivity in scholarship and/or creative work, the department should address how and whether the candidate meets these expectations.
  - Departments should include the name of the scribe in the Departmental Summary.
  - When faculty are not present, a reason should be noted, if possible (sabbatical, travel, etc.)

### **Other issues for Chairs**

In addition to arranging external evaluators, the Chairs have many responsibilities both during the promotion process and earlier. When there are procedural difficulties (such as difficulties finding external evaluators, or letters of dissent), the Chair is uniquely placed to explain any irregularities. And in the years prior to promotion, the Chair has a responsibility to work with their faculty to ensure that anyone coming up for promotion is prepared to do so. In particular:

- Chairs should ensure that any issues with teaching and service that might impact promotion are pointed out to the candidates in their annual Faculty Service Reviews, so that faculty have an opportunity to address them before coming up for promotion.
- While peer observations of teaching are not required in the Faculty Handbook, it is the norm for candidates to have at least a couple of observations since their last promotion. We would strongly encourage Chairs to help faculty arrange such observations on a regular basis (perhaps once every 2-3 years).
- When there are letters of dissent in the file, it is important for the Chair and the Dean to address the concerns raised and provide perspective on how widely shared the concerns are within the department and/or college, and how valid they may be.