Letter to external referees for initial promotion or appointment to tenure

*The substantive responses of at least ten referees will be sought to clarify the strengths (in a comparative context) of a candidate for tenure. The list of external referees and the list of comparison scholars must be approved by relevant divisional dean and the FAS Dean’s Office. These letters must be solicited and reviewed by the department prior to its making a recommendation to forward the case or not forward the case to the relevant Tenure and Appointments Committee.*

Dear [Referee Name]:

Thank you for agreeing to assist us in considering the [SELECT ONE: promotion/appointment] of Professor [Candidate Name] to the rank of [SELECT ONE: Associate Professor/Professor] with tenure in the [SELECT ONE: Department/Program] of [Department/Program Name] at Yale. The [SELECT ONE: department/program] faculty who will be voting on this case greatly appreciate your willingness to evaluate [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] qualifications for this [appointment/promotion].

To be appointed with tenure at Yale requires that the candidate “*stand among the foremost leaders in the world in a broad field of knowledge.”* Tenure at Yale“*is reserved for candidates whose published work significantly extends the horizons of their discipline(s). A tenure appointment…requires evidence of an ongoing and ambitious research agenda… Excellent teaching and engaged University and professional citizenship within and beyond a department or program are also expected.”*

[Choose one of the following two paragraphs for associate or full professor with tenure:]

As to rank, our guidelines further state that “*Associate professors are expected to build upon the accomplishments that earned them their permanent appointments, so that within a reasonable period of time their body of work will merit their consideration for full professor. The title of full professor is earned by those individuals who have a body of distinguished achievements in their record of research, with a commensurate national and international reputation, and who (continue to) display the excellence in teaching and service that is expected of all tenured professors at Yale.”*

[OR, FOR FULL PROFESSOR:]

As to rank, our guidelines further state that “*The title of full professor is earned by those individuals who have a body of distinguished achievements in their record of research, with a commensurate national and international reputation, and who (continue to) display the excellence in teaching and service that is expected of all tenured professors at Yale.*

The [SELECT ONE: Department/Program] is seeking your assessment of Professor [Candidate Name]’s contributions to the advancement of knowledge; we also welcome any information you might have about [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] qualities and promise as a teacher, colleague, and university or professional citizen. We are interested not only in your assessment of [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] past accomplishments but also in your views about [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] promise for lasting and distinguished contributions in the future.

Professor [Candidate Name]’s materials may be accessed through Interfolio once you accept the request.

We have also attached guidelines for preparing your letter. Your letter will be most helpful to us if it provides answers to each of the questions on that list. Please begin by explaining how well and in what capacity you know the candidate.

The central question, of course, is whether Professor [Candidate Name]’s work meets the criteria for tenure articulated above. To help us assess the candidate’s standing in the field, we ask you to compare [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] work to that of the leading scholars in [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] field from a variety of career stages. We would appreciate your comments on the candidate’s work in comparison to the work of [Comparator #1 Name], [Comparator #2 Name], [Comparator #3 Name], and [Comparator #4 Name]. If there are others to whom we should be comparing [SELECT ONE: him/her/them], please include them in your comparison. What is your assessment of Professor [Candidate Name]’s chances of eventually attaining a similar level of distinction as the most distinguished of these scholars when [SELECT ONE: he reaches/she reaches/they reach] a similar stage of [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] career?

On behalf of us all, I thank you in advance for your assistance. It would be most helpful if we could have your confidential response by [Response Deadline]. There is no need for a hard copy; the electronic version is sufficient.

Your letter will be kept in strict confidence, read only by the voting members of the [SELECT ONE: department/program], by full professors on the appropriate Tenure and Appointments Committees, and by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Office. Please keep in mind that these readers will include both experts and non-experts in the candidate’s field of research.

We thank you in advance for offering your wisdom and expertise in this evaluation.

Cordially,

[Chair Name]

Chair, [SELECT ONE: Department/Program] of [Department Name]

*Template updated 11/12/2020*

Guidelines for referees

We would be grateful if you would consider the points below as you prepare your letter.

1. What are the candidate’s principal scholarly contributions, and what is your critical assessment (both strengths and weaknesses) of the originality, quality, and impact of the candidate’s scholarship?
2. What is your overall appraisal of the candidate’s record of achievement and productivity? (Tenure clocks, of course, can differ for candidates for a number of reasons such as child rearing, national service, and disability. Please be assured that any such adjustments of the clock will be factored into our understanding of your comments about achievement and productivity.)
3. What is your assessment of the intellectual trajectory of the candidate’s work? If the candidate is not currently among the foremost leaders in the field in the world, are they likely to rise to that status within the next few years?
4. Is the candidate’s work in their subfield relevant to scholars in broader or adjacent fields or disciplines, and if so, how?
5. We welcome comments on the candidate’s field, the quality of scholarship within it, and its relationship to broader contours of the disciplines.

6/21/2017