Letter to external referees for initial promotion to tenure

*The substantive responses of at least seven referees who hold an “arm’s-length” relation to the candidate will be sought to clarify the strengths (in a comparative context) of a candidate for tenure. At least four of the letters must come from referees who have not previously written for the candidate for an appointment or promotion at Yale. The list of external referees and the list of comparison scholars must be approved by the relevant divisional dean and the FAS Dean’s Office. These letters must be solicited and reviewed by the department or program 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 promotion 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 promotion.

Tenured faculty at Yale are expected to stand among the foremost leaders in their fields throughout the world.

Because a tenure appointment is without term, it is a forward-looking judgment, even as it is based on achievements to date. It expresses the University’s commitment to, and faith in, a faculty member’s ongoing career of distinguished research and scholarship, disciplinary and interdisciplinary leadership, committed teaching, and engaged university citizenship.

[If the promotion is to the rank of Associate Professor with Tenure, also include the following paragraph:]

*“Criteria for appointment or promotion to associate professor with tenure and appointment or promotion to full professor differ in degree, rather than in kind. Tenured associate professors are expected to have shown evidence of exceptional accomplishments and future promise that makes the sponsoring department or program confident that within five years they will merit promotion at Yale to the rank of professor.”*

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 when [SELECT ONE: he reaches/she reaches/they reach] a similar stage of [SELECT ONE: his/her/their] career as the most distinguished of these scholars?

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 10/26/2020*

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 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.

6/22/2017