

Rationale for Best Practices

1. **Use of external reviews:** Soliciting external reviews is a well established and accepted practice on this campus. The parent institutions also expect it. Almost all departments routinely solicit reviews of scholarship regardless of the candidate's area of excellence. Thus, in order to permit committees to make judgments on cases from across campus, it is recommended that reviews of scholarship and creative endeavor be obtained whenever the candidate has an expectation of doing such scholarship as part of their load, whether that scholarship is the basis of excellence or competence in a case.

It is also common practice, but not as widespread, to solicit external reviews on any area of excellence. In order to provide external validation for a claim of excellence, it is recommended that this practice be followed, and that external review be solicited about any area of excellence. If external review is being sought for more than one area, a department may choose different reviewers for the various areas, or the same reviewers, depending on the general practice of their discipline. Whether the same or different reviewers are used, they should be specifically asked for judgments about competence and/or excellence in each of the relevant areas, using the departmental criteria document as a guide.

2. **Timing:** As is clearly general practice, chairs should ask potential reviewers about their willingness well in advance of the process. Chairs should get a commitment from the requisite numbers of reviewers before materials are sent to them. Materials should be sent to reviewers during the Spring semester, no later than early to mid-April prior to the subsequent Fall semester when the case is to be submitted. Materials should be returned to campus so that candidates have them in hand in time to write their case using them; late June or early July is a workable deadline for most candidates.
3. **Number of reviews:** Indiana University policy states that "a target of six letters enhances the reliability and accuracy of recommendations." This should also be the goal for IPFW faculty for any area of excellence. In point 1, we noted that many departments solicit external reviews of scholarship or creative endeavor to establish competence when teaching (or perhaps service) is the area of excellence. When a *second* set of reviews is used to address competence in scholarship or creative endeavor, a target of three or four reviewers is acceptable.
4. **Choosing reviewers:** The most widely used practice on this campus is for the faculty candidate and the chair, and sometimes other senior faculty, to establish a list of potential reviewers in collaboration. This practice has much to commend it. Often the candidate is the best person to know who the scholars in his or her area of scholarship are, often in a better position than the chair or colleagues. Candidates and chairs should be reminded, however, that reviewers are expected to be independent, and not to be past collaborators, personal friends, or mentors of the candidate. That said, it is sometimes impossible for a candidate who actively pursues scholarship in a particular area not to be acquainted with potential reviewers in a professional context. Acquaintance is not equivalent to being a collaborator,

mentor, or personal friend. The reviews should be solicited by and returned to the chair.

Reviewers are expected to be credible sources, and generally at or above the rank the candidate is seeking. It is wise to choose at least some reviewers from higher-ranking institutions, such as those which offer doctoral degrees. Reviewers should be asked to provide a cv, and to explain in what context they know the candidate.

5. **Confidentiality of reviewers and of reviews:** External review letters are available to the candidate via a public records request under the Indiana Access to Public Records Act. Therefore, it is logical and consistent with the state statute to inform reviewers that the letters will be provided to the candidate and for external letters to be shared with the candidate. Departments are expected to follow this practice.
6. **Informing reviewers about confidentiality:** Reviewers should be told that candidates will have full access to the reviews and the identities of the reviewers.
7. **What to provide:** Departments have different practices about what they provide reviewers. At a minimum, reviewers need the following information:
 - the nature of this campus, the teaching and service loads, and the expectations for scholarship and creative endeavor
 - what level of promotion the candidate seeks (professor, associate professor, tenure)
 - whether the candidate is seeking to demonstrate competence or excellence in a particular area
 - the department's promotion and tenure criteria document

In the domain of scholarship, departments and disciplines vary in how much material to send, so chairs should be guided by the principle that reviewers should have sufficient materials to make meaningful judgments against the department's criteria for competence and excellence at that level of promotion (e.g., professor, associate professor, and/or the awarding of tenure).

Reviewers being asked to make judgments about teaching should be provided with a teaching portfolio consisting of such materials as student and peer evaluations, syllabi, exams, and other course materials, and where possible, samples of teaching (e.g., access to online courses, or DVDs of lectures), of student outcomes, and samples of pedagogical scholarship or published instructional materials.

Reviewers being asked to make judgments about service should be provided with information about the candidate's service (campus, professional, community), including information about extensiveness and impact of that service.

8. **Accepting reviews:** Hard copy with a signature on institutional letterhead is the best form in which to receive external reviews. It is also acceptable to receive reviews as attachments to

email messages, as long as letterhead and signature are embedded in the document. Unsigned email reviews are not an acceptable format.

9. **Sending reviews forward:** It is not considered ethical for any department chair to withhold an external review that is received in time to be used by the primary committee. If the primary committee has already voted on a case when the review is received, it cannot be considered by any other level unless the department makes a formal request to reopen the case. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs for guidance in the procedures for making such a request.