External Review Letter Sample Language

Please read the Office of the Provost guidance on gathering external review letters (<https://provost.uoregon.edu/external-letters-evaluation> ) prior to starting this process.

## **Sample inquiry regarding availability to serve as external reviewer**

Subject Line: Request for promotion review

DATE

NAME

Department of X

University of Y

Dear Professor LASTNAME:

The Department of X at the University of Oregon is evaluating NAME, TITLE, for promotion to NEW TITLE. The faculty have identified you as a scholar who could provide particularly valuable insights regarding NAME’s candidacy for promotion. I sincerely hope that you will be able to accept my invitation to participate in this important evaluation. I have attached a copy of NAME’s vita for your reference.

**[Select one of the two following paragraphs to reflect the candidate’s waiver status, which must be expressed in writing before external letters are solicited.]**

**Sample paragraph if candidate chooses full or partial waiver of access:**

Your letter will become part of the official personnel review file. NAME has voluntarily waived in advance access to the external review letters, with the expectation that this waiver will enable reviewers to provide thorough and candid evaluations. This waiver has been reviewed for its legality, and I can assure you that the University will not disclose your letter to the candidate, although we cannot predict whether a court challenge might result in disclosure. With the waiver, NAME retains the right to request a substantive summary of all evaluative remarks, carefully edited to avoid disclosure of the identity of the referee.

Or

**Sample paragraph if candidate retains access to the external review letters:**

Your letter will become part of the official personnel review file. Oregon law permits full access of a faculty member to his or her personnel files unless such access is voluntarily waived. I must tell you that your letter will be seen by NAME should [he/she] request access to [his/her] file.

**And (FOR ALL LETTERS)**

Some circumstances might constitute a conflict of interest. If any of these situations apply to you, please let us know: Close personal relationship with the candidate; dissertation advisor; member of doctoral committee; former informal or formal mentor or advisor; former colleague (professionally or as a student); collaborator within the review period. Please inform us if you had served as a reviewer for this same faculty member in a prior promotion review.

Please let me know by DATE, whether or not you will be able to serve as a reviewer. If you agree to provide a review, I will forward a package containing NAME’s personal statement and CV and representative examples of NAME’s [scholarship and/or other appropriate evidence of professional activity], as well as the department’s statement of criteria for promotion. Should you accept, I would need your evaluation by DATE.

I sincerely hope you will be able to assist in this important decision and look forward to your response.

With my best wishes,

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Title

Address

Telephone

e-mail address

## **Sample letter after the reviewer has agreed to provide the requested review**

DATE

NAME

Department of X

University of Y

Dear Professor LASTNAME:

Thank you for agreeing to review NAME, Professor of SPECIALTY, who is being considered for promotion to TITLE at the University of Oregon. As part of our promotion process, we seek outside reviews from highly regarded faculty members in the candidate’s field to help us assess the candidate’s scholarly contributions to the field. When you submit your evaluation–by DATE, as previously agreed, please also provide a copy of your current curriculum vita and a brief biographical sketch, which we will provide to the University’s personnel committees.

We are providing you with access to Professor NAME’s current CV, personal statement, and representative examples of scholarship and/or creative activity, as well as the Department’s statement of expectations for tenure and promotion.

**[Insert a paragraph here that clarifies the time period of the review. See examples below. It is very important that reviewers focus their analysis on the correct review period. If you have a further question about the review period, contact the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (vpaa@uoregon.edu).]**

**Sample paragraph for candidates who are using some or all years of credit for prior**  **service.**

Professor NAME was hired with credit for prior experience. The primary focus for your review should be the most recent 6 years. While you are of course welcome to comment on earlier activities starting from [6 years ago YEAR], these activities will receive secondary consideration in our internal processes.

## **Sample paragraph for candidates who have one or more tenure clock extensions (Covid**  **extension, parental extensions, qualifying medical leave, or extraordinary**

## **circumstances extensions. Extensions require approval by the Office of the Provost and**  **must be documented in the dossier.)**

It is University of Oregon policy not to count years toward the promotion “clock” for certain qualifying reasons. In this case, the candidate has [EXAMPLE] a one-year tenure clock extension, during which time the tenure clock stopped. Thus, please review this case as if the work had been completed on a [EXAMPLE] 6-year timeline, not a [EXAMPLE] 7-year calendar timeline. All work completed since the XX-XX academic year should be counted in this review.

It will be very helpful to us if your written review addresses the following questions.

* What is the nature of your relationship, if any, to Professor NAME?

* What are the most significant scholarly results/creative work produced by Professor NAME, and what impact have those results/works had on the discipline?

* Please comment on the appropriateness of the venues/outlets used by the candidate to disseminate scholarly products/creative works.

* Please consider contextualizing your remarks in terms of common practices within the discipline or sub-field of the candidate with respect to collaboration, co-authorship, grant funding, or other characteristics.

* How does Professor NAME’s record of scholarship compare–both qualitatively and quantitatively–with other scholars in the field at comparable stages in their academic careers?

* How do you assess Professor NAME’s potential for producing high-quality scholarship going forward?
* Optionally, you may comment on the impact of any professional (disciplinary) service rendered by Professor NAME. We do not ask you to evaluate the significance of Professor NAME’s teaching or local service activities, unless you have had the opportunity to personally observe those activities.

 **[As with the initial solicitation letter described above, this letter must again explain about the candidate’s selected waiver status. Choose from the two options below.]**

**Sample paragraph if candidate choose full or partial waiver of access:**

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Or

**Sample paragraph if candidate retained access to the external review letters:**

Your letter will become part of the official personnel review file. Oregon law permits full access of a faculty member to his or her personnel files unless such access is voluntarily waived. I must tell you that your letter will be seen by NAME should [he/she] request access to [his/her] file.

**And (FOR ALL LETTERS)**

Finally, a few words about the impact of external disruptions. The UO recognizes that faculty research may have been interrupted, interfered with, and/or impeded during the COVID pandemic. Productivity may have been negatively impacted by illness, stress, or unanticipated caregiving responsibilities. The Office of the Provost has encouraged faculty members undergoing tenure and promotion review to describe the impact of COVID-19 in their research, teaching, service, and equity statements, when relevant. The Office of the Provost requests that external reviewers evaluating dossiers remain cognizant of, and sensitive to, COVID-related disruptions.

Furthermore, many faculty members have recently experienced research and programmatic disruptions due to federal government mandates and abrupt withdrawal of research funding. The Office of the Provost asks candidates to describe extraordinary circumstances affecting their scholarship in their statement. We ask that you consider these circumstances thoughtfully in your review.

I sincerely appreciate your time and effort and thank you in advance for your evaluation.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Title

Address

Telephone

e-mail address

documents attached or linked
 CV
 personal statement
 representative examples of scholarship and/or creative activity
 the Department’s statement of expectations for tenure and promotion

## **Sample Thank You Letter upon Receipt of Review Letter**

DATE

NAME

Department of X

University of Y

Dear NAME:

On behalf of the Department of X, I am writing to express our sincere appreciation for your review of NAME’s qualifications for promotion.

I recognize that reading an extensive file and preparing a thorough and thoughtful review letter takes time and adds to the burden of many tasks that you face each day. I can assure you that your insight and analysis will play an important role in our decision-making processes both within the Department and at the College and University levels.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Title

Address

Telephone, Email