

Guidelines for Selection of Extramural Consultants

Appointment as or Promotion to Associate/Full Professor in the Tenure, Clinician-Educator or Research Tracks

Revised 11/2020

The Provost is the Chief Academic Officer of the University and is responsible for promulgating policy relating to the tenure and promotion process. In the Office of the Provost, the Vice Provost for Faculty is responsible for establishing the guidelines and overseeing the process of selection of extramural consultants.

Purpose of Using Consultants

- To obtain an unbiased and impartial assessment of a candidate's scholarship, reputation and standing in a specific field.
- To obtain a professional assessment, not a personal reference.

Relationship of the Consultant to the Candidate

- Must be accurately reported.
- Personal relationships should be avoided.
- Nominations by the department (Section A) must be made without consulting the candidate.
- Close professional relationships, such as collaborations on publications, Principal Investigator or Co-PI, may not constitute more than one consultant nominated by the department (Section A) and not more than one consultant nominated by the candidate (Section B).
- Former University of Pennsylvania faculty will have retired or resigned at least five years prior to the date on the request for approval form. All previous Penn appointments must be disclosed.
- If possible, at least one member of the department's most recent external review committee who is qualified to review the candidate should be included.
- The candidate's thesis advisor can serve as an external consultant nominated by the candidate (Section B) but cannot serve as an external consultant nominated by the department. If the candidate does not nominate his/her thesis advisor and the department wishes to solicit a letter from that individual, the letter is considered as additional material and should be placed in the internal letters of recommendation in the final dossier. A letter from the candidate's thesis advisor is not required.
- No more than one member of the candidate's dissertation committee may be nominated by the department.

The following professional relationships, with sufficient explanation and disclosure, may be permissible:

- May have served on committees together.
- May be Co-editors or have editor/chapter contributor relationship of textbook or textbook chapter(s).
- Co-authors on multi-authored consensus and research publications. An explanation for the reason why the co-authorship does not represent direct collaboration must be clear. For example:
 - Candidate and consultant contributed independently to study
 - Local PIs with no direct interaction.
 - Contribution of study subjects to a study with no direct contact between the candidate and the extramural consultant.

General Information

- Nominations by the department (Section A) must be made without consulting the candidate.
- No more than two consultants from the same institution should be selected.
- For Associate Professor actions (promotions and new appointments), the number of consultants allowed at the rank of Associate Professor is limited to two. All other consultants must be ranked at the Professor level.
- For Professors, all consultants should be at the rank of Professor.

Approval Process

Following initial review by Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, the list of consultants will be reviewed and approved by the PSOM COAP Chair, the Dean, and finally, the Vice Provost for Faculty (*if applicable*).

Confidentiality

The process is confidential.

No contacts should be made in advance to determine:

- If the consultant will be willing to provide an assessment.
- If the consultant has prior knowledge of the candidate.
- If the consultant is willing to provide a positive assessment of the candidate's work.
- To avoid establishing a biased and potentially inaccurate dossier, it is NOT acceptable to discuss the case with a proposed consultant.
- If a letter of evaluation has not been received by the stated deadline, Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, a member of the PSOM COAP or the Dean may contact an external consultant for the sole purpose of determining whether the consultant intends to send the requested letter.

Use of the Pre-Contact Letter

The department chair must send the pre-contact letter to each consultant who has been designated by the candidate and the department as soon as the list of consultants is approved by the Vice Provost for Faculty. The PSOM approved pre-contact letter must be used in its entirety and may not be revised.

Text of the pre-contact letter:

“OUR DEPARTMENT IS RECOMMENDING _____ FOR APPOINTMENT AS/PROMOTION TO _____. BECAUSE OF YOUR EXPERTISE AND PROMINENCE IN THE FIELD, I HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT THE PERELMAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS (COAP) CONTACT YOU TO PROVIDE A CANDID ASSESSMENT OF DR. _____’S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS POSITION. SHOULD THEY ELECT TO DO SO, THEY WILL CONTACT YOU DIRECTLY. THE UNIVERSITY’S ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS IS CONFIDENTIAL, SO ALL CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMENTS MUST BE DIRECTED TO THE COAP AND NOT TO ME. I URGE YOU TO REPLY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO THEIR REQUEST, FOR A TIMELY DECISION BY COAP IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO BOTH THE CANDIDATE AND THE DEPARTMENT. I APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN PROVIDING THIS EXPERTISE TO THE PERELMAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.”

Consultant Qualifications

Consultants should be:

- Experts or specialists in the candidate’s field or multiple fields, if interdisciplinary.
- From peer institutions and/or institutions known for work in the specific field. If the consultant is not from a peer institution, include supporting documentation attesting to the rationale for choosing that consultant from that institution.
- At an academic rank equal to or higher than the rank which is being recommended for appointment or promotion of the candidate.
- Different from those who may be included in the educational database.

Information describing the expertise of the consultant must be provided.

- Stating, in the qualifications field, that a consultant is an “expert,” “specialist,” or their level of recognition (regionally, nationally, internationally) in their given field is not sufficient.
- Stating that a consultant is a member of a graduate group or clinical trial is not sufficient.
- The description of the consultants’ contributions to the field must be fully explained.
- At least two (2) or more of the items listed below must be included in the description:
 - Regionally, Nationally or Internationally recognized for making advances in:
 - (State field of study). Note: This is not the same as stating that a consultant is internationally recognized as a leader in the field. The key factor is “making advances.”
 - Pioneered (state here)
 - Discovered the (state here);
 - President, (name of Society, Committee, etc.), (include year(s) office held).
 - Chair (name of Department, Society, Committee, etc.), (year(s) office held).
 - Editor of (state name of professional journal, etc.)
 - Published numerous articles/publications related to (state name of specialty, should relate to candidate’s field)

Examples:

- “Pioneered the use of inhaled nitric oxide in preterm infants with respiratory distress.”
- “Nationally recognized expert in palliative care, education and decision-making; President American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Care Medicine, 2005.”
- “Discovered a novel hormone called resistin, which plays a critical role in glucose metabolism.”
- “Member of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, 2005.”
- “Member of Consortium, which provides expression profiling services to thousands of neuroscience and mental health researchers throughout the nation.”

Additional Letters

Additional letters of recommendation from faculty colleagues, thesis advisors, students, or trainees which are not included in the educational database may be included in the dossier:

- May be solicited by the candidate or by the department.
- May be unsolicited and sent to the department or to Faculty Affairs and Professional Development.
- May be written by current or former Penn faculty to provide additional information regarding a candidate's qualifications, particularly in the areas of interdisciplinary, interdepartmental and inter-school activities.

Consultant-Provided Materials

Depending on the track, the consultant will be asked to provide:

- An assessment of the scope, importance and significance of the candidate's scholarly accomplishments (tenure and research).
- Quality of academic contributions. Focused comments on the nature and substance of the scholarly and clinical contributions of the candidate (C-E).
- A list of several outstanding peers within the candidate's discipline and an evaluation of the candidate's standing with respect to these individuals (all tracks).
- An estimate of the likelihood of the candidate achieving a similar rank and tenure, if applicable, at other institutions comparable to Penn (all tracks).
- An assessment of the candidate's strengths in professional ability, quality and nature of teaching (C-E).
- Other evidence of stature of the individual as indicated by direction of a division or program, leadership at regional or national level on committees, participation in CME programs or invited lectures (C-E).
- Any additional comments on qualifications.