

EXTERNAL REVIEWER EVALUATIONS

GUIDELINES

The Central Committee Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion (RTP) together with the Administration expect that files submitted by faculty being considered for major personnel actions will contain current reviews (obtained since the candidate's last review for reappointment or promotion) of their work by at least two external evaluators unless a prior decision has been made not to require such evaluations for a particular reappointment review.

All instructional units and the Library will have on file in the Office of Academic Affairs a procedure for soliciting external evaluations that reflects the current practice of the unit. The following guidelines are intended to define minimum criteria for the external review process. The various units conducting external reviews of their faculty may wish to add to the procedures herein outlined.

I. PERSONNEL ACTIONS FOR WHICH EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS ARE REQUIRED

Decisions on promotion to Associate and Full Professor/Associate Librarian and Librarian. Decisions on reappointment taking place in the sixth year of the normal seven-year probationary period for Assistant Professors—or the equivalent year for Associate Professors without tenure and Assistant Professors awarded credit for prior academic service. Decisions on reappointment for Assistant Librarians, Senior Assistant Librarians, Associate Librarians, and Librarians when a continuing appointment is under consideration.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

External evaluators must be established scholars or practitioners in the field or fields of the faculty candidate's specialization. Ordinarily, external evaluators should be senior tenured faculty members at recognized universities and colleges or senior staff at research institutes. However, in some fields it may be more appropriate to seek out similarly qualified professional persons or practitioners connected with other types of institutions and with different, but substantial, qualifications in their fields. In such cases, at least one reviewer must be connected with an institution of higher education and be familiar with commonly accepted standards for tenure and promotion. For external reviewers who are not senior tenured faculty members, the dossier should include information that establishes their suitability to provide a knowledgeable recommendation relevant to the personnel action under consideration. External reviewers must not be former teachers, colleagues, research associates, or personal friends, nor should they be people who have evaluated the candidate's work in the past, either at New Paltz or at another institution. Acceptable external evaluators may be professionally acquainted with the faculty candidate's work from conferences or other scholarly or creative venues.

III. SELECTION OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS:

The most common manner of selecting external evaluators is for the faculty candidate and his/her department chair to work closely together on the matter. The candidate should suggest the names of potential evaluators who meet the criteria stated in II above; five potential evaluators is a useful number to start with. The department chair and Dean or Director, in consultation will add to the names received from the candidate and then they will select at least one reviewer from the faculty candidate's list and at least one name added by that list who will best serve the purpose of evaluating the candidate's work to ensure that at least two written external evaluations are received in a timely manner for review. All letters that are received must be submitted for review. Confidentiality of the external reviewers' comments must be maintained unless and until a reviewer gives explicit permission to reveal the contents of the review. To ensure that confidentiality is maintained, the final list of names to whom letters are sent should not be

revealed to the candidate. Chairs should contact prospective evaluators as soon as possible to ascertain their willingness to serve in this capacity.

Before finalizing the names of external evaluators to whom letters are to be sent, the dean or department chair must verify, in a confidential manner, that the identified reviewer has not previously served as an external evaluator of the candidate for tenure or promotion at New Paltz or any other institution.

Should the chair and/or the candidate choose not to participate in the process of selecting external evaluators, it shall be the responsibility of the dean/director of the unit to do so, and that dean/director may consult with the candidate and/or department chair concerning the selection of external evaluators. It is the responsibility of the candidate and the department chair to inform the dean/director in a timely manner that they wish the dean/director to perform this function.

The Administration may on its own initiative seek one or more supplementary external evaluations of a candidate if it is deemed that a particular personnel decision requires such action.

IV. MATERIALS FOR REVIEW BY EXTERNAL EVALUATORS:

External evaluators should not be expected to evaluate the candidate's contribution to instruction, advising, on-campus committee service and so forth but should instead evaluate the candidate's scholarly/creative performance. The primary materials for evaluation are products appropriate to the candidate's discipline: such as books, articles, grant proposals, computer programs, facsimiles of paintings or other visual works, or reviews of performances.

In some disciplines it may be important for evaluators to assess the candidate's service to the discipline and/or to well-defined constituencies external to SUNY New Paltz if such professional service can be sufficiently documented so that an external evaluator can assess the value of such activities. External evaluators should not be expected to return the materials sent to them unless special arrangements are made to cover the cost of a return mailing.

The candidate's curriculum vitae must always be included in the materials supplied to external reviewers. All units of SUNY New Paltz now require that candidates for reappointment and/or promotion include in their files a brief narrative that speaks to the candidate's professional goals, his/her plans to achieve those goals, and his/her achievements in the several categories considered in the evaluation of faculty for major personnel actions. Such narratives assist evaluators in understanding the institution and the constraints under which the candidate may have to function. The narratives further aid external evaluators in comparing SUNY New Paltz with those institutions with which the evaluator may be familiar.

V. FORMAL REQUEST TO EXTERNAL EVALUATORS:

When materials for evaluation such as those described in IV above have been gathered, they should be sent to the external evaluators under cover of a letter that requests the evaluator to address specific questions concerning the material. The model letter (attached) will be used by all units of SUNY New Paltz (except the Library). Department chairs and/or deans may make such modifications in the letter to external evaluators as will be appropriate to the circumstances of a particular candidate or discipline.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY:

External evaluators must be given the opportunity to submit their evaluations in complete confidentiality. The cover letter to an external evaluator must contain the following:

Unless otherwise instructed, confidentiality of your response will be maintained.

Please address the issue of the confidentiality of your evaluation in the following manner:

May the candidates read this recommendation? Yes/ No

If the respondent does not reply to the above questions, or if the respondent's reply is negative, the statement of the external reviewer shall not be made available to the candidate.

All external evaluations are to be considered by departmental sub-committees and department chairs in the process of making recommendations for major personnel actions. Care must be taken during such review to preserve the confidentiality of those external evaluators who may have requested it.

External evaluations are to be included in all copies of the candidate's file to be considered in the personnel action. Unless an evaluator has designated that a letter may be made available to the candidate, the evaluation must be placed in an envelope marked "confidential" and not be made available to the candidate.

On the matter of such confidential communications, see the NYS/UUP Agreement, Article 31.2 (b).

VII. TIME-TABLE FOR SOLICITING EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS:

Be aware that soliciting external evaluations takes time: time to contact potential evaluators, time to gather and send materials, time to receive a response. The process should be started as early as possible. External evaluators should be informed of the time-frame for a response. An evaluator should be given a specific deadline for a response in the cover letter. The files of candidates being considered for personnel actions in the spring (when most cases requiring external evaluation are reviewed), are due to the Central Committee early in March. Therefore, external reviewers should be identified and in possession of materials to review before the end of the Fall Term.

Should you have questions about the process of soliciting external evaluations, please confer with the Provost.