

## Preparing Strong Files: External Letters

- Selection of reviewers
  - Deciding who to ask:
    - Reviewers from unit's identified peers or equivalent
    - If reviewer is not from a peer school, explain why this reviewer was selected
    - Full professors or other exceptionally well qualified evaluators are best
  - Who *not* to ask:
    - Anyone who has a close relationship with candidate (e.g., dissertation committee member, co-author)
    - The greater the relational distance with the candidate, the better
  - Chair consults with dean prior to final selection of (10) reviewers

## Preparing Strong Files: The External Letter

- Strategies to increase probability of quality reviews (evaluation vs. praise)
  - Request detailed analysis and evaluation of the quality of the candidate's scholarship/professional activities and their impact on the candidate's field
  - Compare candidate to others in the field or subfield who are at the same point in their careers
  - Evaluate suitability of tenure and/or promotion based on ASU departmental criteria and at your institution

## ACADEMIC SENATE REQUIREMENTS (4/15/85) FOR SOLICITATION OF OUTSIDE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- The chair/director and dean proposes reviewers, and the candidate proposes reviewers. Reviewers ultimately solicited will represent both lists equally. All reviews received will be included in the candidate's file.
- Evaluations are solicited by the unit chair/director from persons of high reputation in the candidate's field.
- The reviewer is asked for a statement regarding his or her acquaintance with the applicant.
- Guidelines with specific questions are furnished to each reviewer so that the evaluations will have a consistent format and can be utilized objectively. Attached is a suggested template for the outside letter; ***units may modify as needed.***
- In order to give the reviewer an opportunity to develop a quality response, the reviewer shall be given at least 45 days to respond; a longer time period for response is strongly recommended.
- External letters are part of the evaluation of research, publication, and creative activity.

## External Letter Templates and Forms

- See <http://www.asu.edu/provost/forms/> for templates:
  - Request for Academic Personnel Actions Form
  - Sample Outside Reviewer Letter
  - Record of Outside Letters Form
  - P & T Thank You Letter to External Reviewer

## RECORD OF OUTSIDE LETTERS FOR ASU TENURE OR CONTINUING STATUS AND/OR PROMOTION

Candidate's Name: *Minnie Mouse*

Academic Unit: *Science*

Name of Referent	Affiliation & Position	Peer Inst. (Y or N) *	Reason for Invitation/Professional Qualifications/ Relationship to Candidate	Suggested by: *	
				(check one) Candidate	Chair/Dean
1. Francis Bacon	Department of Science Indiana University Distinguished Professor of Science		Internationally recognized scholar in candidate's field/None		X
2. Rosalind X. Franklin	Department of Science Pennsylvania State University Professor & Head		Internationally recognized scholar in candidate's field/None		X
3. Alice Einstein	Department of Science University of California at San Diego Associate Professor		Internationally recognized scholar in candidate's field/None	X	
4. Professor Plum	Department of Science East Stroudsburg State College Associate Professor		Internationally recognized scholar in candidate's field/None	X	
5. Sir Isaac Newton	Department of Science University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana Professor		Internationally recognized scholar in candidate's field/Dissertation Chair	X	

## Example #1: External Letter (Positive but not helpful)

Monday July 1, 2003

*Chair Suggested*

Professor Smee  
Chair, Science Department

Dear Dr. Smee:

It is a pleasure to help evaluate Marie Curie for promotion to Associate Professor and tenure at the University of Arizona in Tempe.

I do not know Dr. Curie personally, but am aware of her work from the literature. The work is relevant to our studies on the significance of neural pathways in \_\_\_\_\_. I believe that her published work is excellent; she uses sophisticated methods to characterize \_\_\_\_\_. I have been particularly impressed with her recent studies in the area of \_\_\_\_\_.

Dr. Curie's published studies are of consistently high quality and the systems she has set up are fertile ones. Though her studies represent basic research, they have clear implications for understanding \_\_\_\_\_. Dr. Curie's work is at the cutting edge of research in this area. For all these reasons I strongly recommend Dr. Curie for promotion and would offer a similarly strong recommendation were she being considered for an analogous promotion at my own institution.

Sincerely,

Peter Pan, Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Minnesota Medical School

## Example #2: External Letter (More info, but not very specific)

Dear Professor Snowflake:

I am writing with my evaluation of Dr. A. W. Peabody's dossier and application for promotion and tenure. Dr. Peabody has established a strong track record of teaching, research, and professional service, and based on those I would consider him to be qualified for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor.

As I have not directly observed Dr. Peabody's teaching or service, I will focus below on his research. However, I think it's worth commenting in passing that Dr. Peabody's C.V. attests to his strengths in these other areas. Dr. Peabody has taught a large number of courses, ranging from star interpretation to research methods in astrological phenomena to planetary influence. He has chaired more than 21 MA and Ph.D. thesis committees, and served on many others, reflecting his success as a mentor of advanced graduate students. With respect to professional service, Dr. Peabody has an extensive record of involvement in the wider profession (e.g., with the National Astrologers Review Board) as well as service to the university.

Dr. Peabody's research interests have focused on the burgeoning area of the application of the internet in astrological prediction, investigating the extent to which technology inhibits or helps the accuracy of such predictions. Through detailed analyses of the workload of practicing astrologers, Dr. Peabody shows that the internet is an important influence in this area. These findings are especially important for informing current practice in the training of future astrologers. Dr. Peabody has published the results of this research in a Suitably Important Ivy League Press, and in various articles. I expect that this line of research will continue to be profitable for some time to come, and that it will have an important influence on test development.

In sum, Dr. Peabody has developed a reputation for careful scholarship, in addition to his exemplary records in teaching and service. Based on these contributions, he would be eligible for promotion and tenure at other universities that I am familiar with. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions that I could help with.

## Example #3: *Excerpt* -- Critical yet Positive Review

**Despite my positive comments, I would be remiss if I didn't point out what I see as some of the problems with Professor Einstein's model.** He makes a rather strong claim that "Heidegger's theory stresses the contextual nature of parenting" (p. xx). Actually, the theory as set down by Heidegger does not make such a claim: rather, it is some of the modern interpreters of the theory, such as William Shakespeare, John F. Kennedy, and Mel Gibson, among others, who have made the case for contextual competence. This may seem like a minor point, but I don't believe it is, because it is at the heart of the growing controversy between contextualists and theorists.

I want to be clear, however, that I am not arguing the Professor Einstein is completely inaccurate in his assertion, since it is possible to find support for the contextual model with a liberal reading of Heidegger, but it is not accurate to say that it is Heidegger's theory per se that supports such a contextualist stance. Somewhat more problematic is that despite his nice discussion of the Biological Aspect of Parenting (BAP) and the need for gynecological tests to take account of this important construct, I am not able to determine how the BAP actually fits into his model. If the BAP were to be part of the new model he suggests, it would mean that conceiving children and parenting children would not be independent activities. Finally, I cannot agree with his broad claim (p. 555) that "in general, individual parents rely solely on their personal family environment for parenting strategies." While some parenting couples do depend on their families to determine how to raise their children, many couples are more expansive. For example, age, ethnicity, education, and family economics often result in parenting situations in which the participants look for help outside the family boundaries. **Although the book is not without its problems, I continue to believe that it is an important step in theoretically and empirically challenging the intellectual bias against parenting.**

**In conclusion, I would recommend that Professor Einstein be promoted and tenured.** He has produced and is likely to continue to produce a coherent body of research in an area, parenting, that is gaining in importance and relevance as researchers come to recognize the power of parents to affect, directly and indirectly, people's lives.