813.03 Procedures for Obtaining External Peer Reviews

Existing Text

813.03 Procedures for Obtaining External Peer Reviews

Each department (or college) shall establish the specific procedures by which external peer reviews shall be conducted. When required, peer reviews shall be obtained from no fewer than three (3) external reviewers, the majority of whom shall be recommended by the primary review committee, the minority of whom shall be recommended by the candidate.

Note: University guidelines do not require external peer reviews for third-year (retention) reviews. However, college or department guidelines may require such an assessment.

Proposed New Text

Each department (or college) shall establish the specific procedures by which external peer reviews shall be conducted. When required, external peer reviews shall be obtained from five (5) external reviewers, at least 50% of whom shall be recommended by the primary review committee. In the event that fewer than five (5) letters are obtained, it is the responsibility of the primary review committee to explain, as part of their recommendation, why fewer than five letters were obtained. For cases in which the candidate is being reviewed for “accomplishment” or “excellence” in the scholarship of teaching, at least three (3) of the solicited external letters must also include an evaluation of the candidate’s “effectiveness” in research/creative activity, if applicable. These letters may be the same as those solicited for the evaluation of teaching or they may be in addition to these letters (i.e., if additional letters are necessary to assure that at least three (3) letters include an evaluation of research/creative activity).

The procedures for selecting external peer reviewers, soliciting letters, and documenting the external review process should be objective and transparent to review committee members at subsequent levels of administrative review. The following steps, typically carried out by the chair of the primary review committee, are intended to assure transparency: 1) Solicit names of potential reviewers from the candidate; 2) Solicit the names of potential reviewers from members of the primary (Departmental or College) P&T review committee; 3) select a list of names of potential reviewers with at least 50% of names coming from the primary review committee’s list; 4) make initial contact (e.g., via e-mail) with potential reviewers in order to determine their willingness to provide a timely review letter (e.g., see sample solicitation email); 5) send a formal letter of solicitation containing essential elements and enclosures (e.g., see sample solicitation letter); 6) upon receipt of reviewer letters, complete the cover sheet for the external reviewer tab of candidates dossier (see cover sheet); 7) once all letters are received,
insert the completed cover sheet, copies of solicitation letters and e-mails, and all reviewer letters into the dossier.

Note: University guidelines do not require external peer review letters for third-year (retention) reviews. However, college or department guidelines may require such an assessment.
Note that the proposed 3 sample items shown below (1. Sample Cover Sheet on External Letters; 2. Sample Solicitation E-Mail; and 3. Sample Solicitation Letter to External Evaluators) relate to the proposed new text for Sec. 813.03. These sample items may or may not be judged to be appropriate for direct inclusion in the Faculty Handbook. However, the intent is that these 3 sample items be codified in an appropriate document for use in formal review of faculty.

1. SAMPLE COVER SHEET ON EXTERNAL LETTERS*

The chair of the primary review committee should include, along with this cover sheet, letters and e-mails used to solicit reviews and evaluation letters received from reviewers. All evaluation letters received must be reported here and included in the candidate’s dossier. Five external review letters evaluating the candidate's scholarship in his or her selected area of accomplishment or excellence are required. If the candidate's selected area of accomplishment or excellence is the scholarship of teaching, at least three of these letters (or additional letters if needed) must also evaluate the effectiveness of candidate's research/creative activity, if appropriate. If fewer than five letters are received, the primary review committee must explain the reason(s) why in their letter of recommendation/transmittal.

A. Reviewers Suggested by Candidate (include only those who agreed to provide a review)

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<th>Reviewer’s Last Name</th>
<th>Institution or Affiliation</th>
<th>Area of expertise</th>
<th>Relationship to candidate**</th>
<th>Solicitation Date</th>
<th>Reply Date</th>
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B. Reviewers Suggested by Primary Review Committee (include only those who agreed to provide a review)

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<th>Reviewer’s Last Name</th>
<th>Institution or Affiliation</th>
<th>Area of expertise</th>
<th>Relationship to candidate**</th>
<th>Solicitation Date</th>
<th>Reply Date</th>
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* Letters not solicited by the primary review committee or letters from within the University, are not considered within this category and should not be described here.

** For each reviewer, describe his or her relationship to candidate (e.g., none, dissertation advisor, former teacher, colleague, co-author, etc.).
2. SAMPLE INITIAL SOLICITATION EMAIL (OR OTHER INITIAL CONTACT) TO EXTERNAL EVALUATORS REQUESTING REVIEW OF CANDIDATES FOR TENURE AND/OR PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE OR FULL PROFESSOR

Dear Professor YYY,

I am writing to request your assistance. I am responsible for soliciting external reviews for faculty candidates applying for promotion and tenure in the (name of Department) at Montana State University this year. My faculty colleague, (Name), is being considered for (tenure and promotion to Associate Professor or promotion to Full Professor). I am hoping that you will agree to be an external reviewer of (his or her) scholarly record in (research or teaching).

For your convenience, I have attached an electronic copy of (name’s) Curriculum Vitae and our departmental Criteria and Standards document. If you agree to provide this assistance, I will send a formal letter soliciting your review along with hard copy of the attached documents as well as a selection of (name’s) (research products or his or her teaching portfolio).

To stay on the MSU schedule, I would need your review by (date).

Thank you for considering my request in this important matter. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Phone, FAX, email

Enclosures:
(attach CV)
(attach a copy of or link to the Departmental Role and Scope statement)
3. SAMPLE SOLICITATION LETTER TO EXTERNAL EVALUATORS REQUESTING REVIEW OF CANDIDATES FOR TENURE AND/OR PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE OR FULL PROFESSOR

(Note: This letter assumes prior contact with the evaluator and his/her tentative agreement to participate in the review (see sample solicitation email). Significant deviations from this sample letter must be approved by the Dean.)

Dear (name of reviewer):

Thank you for agreeing to provide an external review of (rank and name), who is a candidate for promotion to the rank of (Associate Professor or Professor) (with or without tenure), in the (name of Department) of the (name of College or School) at Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

[Include here a brief description of the candidate's assignment (i.e., teaching, research, and service percentages, administrative responsibilities, etc.)]

To assist the primary review committee and for subsequent levels of review, Montana State University requires that written evaluations be obtained from individuals outside of MSU who are qualified to evaluate the candidate's scholarship in (his or her) selected area of accomplishment or excellence. Prof. (name) has selected (research or teaching) as (his or her) area of (accomplishment or excellence). The enclosed Departmental Role and Scope document provides definitions and additional information on the departmental standards and criteria for (accomplishment and excellence) in (research or teaching).

On behalf to the primary (departmental or college) review committee, I am requesting that you provide a letter describing your assessment of the productivity, quality, significance, and impact on the discipline of Prof. (name)'s scholarship in (his or her) chosen area of (accomplishment or excellence). If you have knowledge and information regarding the candidate's qualifications in areas other than his or her (teaching or research), you are also encouraged to provide comments on (his or her) effectiveness in these areas. For additional information on MSU’s expectations of candidates please consult the university’s Promotion and Tenure Criteria and Standards online at: http://www2.montana.edu/policy/faculty_handbook/fh600.html#600.00.

In addition to the Department’s Role and Scope document, I am enclosing for your information a copy of Prof. (name)'s Vitae, (his or her) personal statement regarding progress in the chosen area of (accomplishment or excellence), and selected materials representing (his or her) scholarly productions in (teaching or research). Please let me know if you need additional materials in order to conduct your review.

Please return your review, on department or business letterhead, directly to me. Since deliberations by the departmental review committee must be concluded by (date), I will need your review by (date). If you are unable to reply by that date, please let me know as soon as possible. Your letter will remain confidential but will become a part of the candidate’s dossier.
In the event of a negative evaluation, however, the candidate may file a grievance, in which case a redacted version of your letter will become available to the candidate.

The MSU promotion and tenure process also requires that we include in the candidate's dossier a copy of each external reviewer's vitae and a short statement describing each reviewer's relationship to the candidate. You may include such a statement either separately or as part of your review. Finally, once your review is completed, please destroy or return any of the personal documentation regarding the candidate.

On behalf of MSU let me express in advance our appreciation for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Phone, FAX, email
Enclosures:
(attach candidate’s CV.)
(attach samples of the candidate’s scholarly work, selected by the candidate)
(attach a copy of the Departmental Role and Scope statement)
(attach candidate’s Personal Statement, provided or not at the candidate’s discretion)

Candidate's Name ____________________________________________________________________