



Tip Sheet: Writing *External* Letters for Promotion and Tenure

You have been asked to be an external reviewer for a faculty member undergoing promotion and tenure outside of IU, now what?

The main purpose of external evaluation letters is for those involved in the promotion and tenure (P&T) process to learn about the impact of the candidate's research, teaching, and service at their institution, professional community, and field.

Before drafting your letter, read the invitation letter and promotion criteria carefully, as some institutions have specific instructions. For example, some will ask for you to say whether or not the candidate would meet the criteria for promotion at your institution, while others will specifically ask you not to do this.

When drafting your letter, consider the following for each of the areas of excellence:

Research

- What impact has the research of the candidate had on the state of the field?
- Is the candidate's research addressing significant gaps in knowledge and/or clinical needs?
- Has the candidate established reagents/methods/datasets/clinical cohorts that are widely used in your professional community?
- Is the candidate using research approaches that are state-of-the-art for your field?
- Does the candidate openly share ideas and/or materials with others in the field?

Teaching

- Is the candidate involved in teaching and mentoring outside of their institution?
- Are the candidate's trainees and students well-trained and prepared for the next step in their careers?
- Does the candidate share training or didactic materials with others outside of their institution?

Service

- Is the candidate involved in national and international leadership? What is the impact of these efforts on your professional community?
- How engaged is the candidate in the national committees and organizations in which they are involved?

The next page provides a suggested outline that can be used as a reference when writing P&T evaluation letters.



Suggested Outline for Writing *External* P&T Evaluation Letters

PARAGRAPH	GOAL OF TEXT	SAMPLE LETTER – RESEARCH AS AREA OF EXCELLENCE
1	Introduce yourself, the reason for the letter, and your qualifications to write the letter	This letter is an assessment of Dr. John Smith’s work to date in rank as Assistant Professor of Medicine to assist with determination of promotion to Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at Medical School College of Medicine. My name is Gabriel Bosslet, and I am associate professor of clinical medicine, assistant dean for faculty affairs and professional development, and Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Fellowship program director at Indiana University. I have served as chair of the Training and Transitions Committee for CHEST, as the section editor for the Training, Education, and Career Hub (TEaCH) of the CHEST journal, assistant editor of the ATS Scholar journal, and as president of the Association of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Program Directors.
2	Identify the promotion pathway as stated in the request letter and identify that you are an arms-length reviewer and how you know the individual.	I am writing this letter of assessment of Dr. John Smith’s work to date in rank as Assistant Professor of Medicine- Clinical to assist with determination of promotion to Associate Professor of Medicine- clinical in the clinician scholar pathway. I have no relationship with Dr. Smith and have not met him before. We have not collaborated on any publications or any committees. I am familiar with his work strictly through review of his dossier provided to me for this evaluation.
3	Establish that you understand the institution’s promotion criteria.	Because all promotion and tenure guidelines differ, I like to start these letters off with guidelines for promotion as provided with the request. To be promoted to Associate Professor- Clinical in the clinician scholar pathway, Dr. Smith must demonstrate that he has developed a national level of impact and recognition.
4	Outline how the candidate meets the guidelines for promotion in the area of excellence. Please note, this example the area of excellence is research. At the end of this document, we have outlined possible items to address in each area of excellence.	Dr. Smith’s area of academic interest is in _____, and he does translational and clinical research in this area. He is a principal investigator or sub-investigator on three randomized controlled trials in this area. This is impressive, given that this is such a rare disease. His CV demonstrates multiple criteria that contribute to a national impact as outlined by the provided guidelines for promotion and tenure: he has multiple grants (including a Path-to-K award); He has 17 publications in rank, including 10 as first author. He has been an invited lecturer to three international meetings. His scholarship accomplishments are very impressive.
5	Paragraph regarding teaching accomplishments to meet criteria outlined in requirements (if needed).	From a teaching perspective, Dr. Smith is highly rated by learners who work with him. He has mentored multiple learners at all levels (fellows, residents, and students). He has documented multiple peer evaluations of teaching that are highly rated. He developed an online curriculum for _____.
6	Paragraph regarding service accomplishments to meet criteria outlined in requirements (if needed).	From a service perspective, he has developed a multidisciplinary clinic, which is rare and unique, and I wish we had one of those here. He is associate director of clinical services for the division and has helped to spearhead the creation of multiple clinical innovations.
7	Summary paragraph- be sure to adhere to the specifics of the letter regarding mentioning whether or not they would be promoted at your institution (some want this and some specifically do not want this).	In the charge letter for this evaluation, I was asked specifically not to comment on whether Dr. Smith would be promoted at my institution, and I will adhere to these guidelines. But I can say that Dr. Smith is the mold of faculty member I would bend over backwards to hire and retain.