

Tenure and Promotion FAQs

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1. Who can and cannot write letters? Whom can I include on my list of suggested reviewers?

- Your dissertation advisor cannot write a letter for you. You can, however, ask your dissertation advisor for suggestions about who you should include on your list of suggested reviewers. You can also ask your advisor if s/he thinks that a particular person will write a good letter for you. If your advisor doesn't know, he or she might be willing to contact the person and feel him/her out.
- The editor of a volume in which your chapter is published can write you a letter as long as the editor is not also a co-author on the chapter you wrote (and has not been your co-author in the past 5 years).
- All reviewers should be tenured. All your reviewers should be of a higher rank than you.
 - Ideally, your external reviewers will be full professors. If you are being evaluated for tenure or promotion to associate professor, it is okay if one or two of your reviewers are associate professors.
- It is fine to include letters from well-respected, accomplished, non-academics in your field, but these should be additional letters. Your core or required letters should be written by faculty members.
- It is fine to request letters from people who know you very well as long as they have not served as your co-author in the past 5 years. In some small fields it will be almost impossible to find someone to write for you who does not know you well.
- You can list more than the required number of people on your list of potential letter writers. List all the people that you think will write you good letters.

2. Should I contact the people I recommend as potential letter writers?

- You should not contact them formally. Your chair will decide whom she or he will contact to officially request letters. You may, however, contact them informally to let them know that you suggested them as potential reviewers.

3. During the review process, do chairs present all external letters they receive?

- It is the policy of Hunter College that chairs present all letters they receive.

4. How long should my research and teaching statements be? Are samples available?

- There's no set rule for how long your statements should be. They need to be long enough to make the case that the work you do is important and programmatic, but they should not be so long that the reader loses interest. Two to three single-spaced pages, with 1 inch margins and 12 point font, is a good goal to shoot for.
- Research and teaching statements vary greatly by field and the GEP does not have samples that it can share. You can, however, ask people who have recently been through the process to share theirs with you. Most will be willing to do so.

- o Make sure you write your statement well ahead of time so that you can get plenty of feedback on your statements. Show them to your chair, senior colleagues, and other members of your circle of advisors.
- 5. I am being reviewed for promotion to full professor. Should my dossier include only my accomplishments since I was promoted to associate professor?**
- o No – your dossier should present your entire professional career. This is especially important for external reviewers who need to get a sense of the contributions you have made throughout your career. The discussion about your candidacy (e.g., in your department, the division committee, college-wide committees), will, however, concentrate on what you have accomplished since you were last promoted.
- 6. Should I include a grant proposal in my dossier?**
- o Many people do. If you do, make sure it's a good grant proposal. It's better if the proposal has been funded, but it's okay to include a proposal that is pending or was not funded if you think it is a strong proposal and if it will provide the reviewer with a good overview of your research program. If you received a good priority score, include that as well.
- 7. Should I include reviews of my book(s) in my dossier?**
- o Yes, if the book has already been published and the reviews are external.
 - o If, however, the book has not yet been published and you only have internal reviews, you should only present those reviews in the dossier that is reviewed internally at Hunter (i.e., don't send the internal reviews to your external reviewers).
- 8. Should I send copies of my book(s) to external reviewers?**
- o Yes, if you can. Even though it may be costly to do this, including the book(s) has a much greater impact than including a chapter or two. This holds only for authored books, not edited volumes.
 - o Do not send edited volumes. Include a copy of the table of contents and your forward, if you wrote one.
 - o If you cannot afford to pay for all the copies yourself, check with your chair to see if the College can provide some money.
- 9. Does the format of my dossier matter?**
- o Yes. An organized, professional-looking document makes a good impression. Make it easy for your reviewers to use and read your dossier. Put all materials in a binder with tabbed labels (a binder is better than a large bound document because it allows reviewers to carry around a one section at a time if they prefer). Include a table of contents.
 - o If your department typically puts the dossier together for its candidates, talk to the chair and offer to do it yourself. Remember, your candidacy is most important to you.
 - o Also consider making a CD with all your materials. Do not send a CD only; make sure you also send a hard copy.
- 10. When are tenure/promotion dossiers due?**
- o The actual dates change from year to year. Contact the Provost's Office for the current schedule.

11. One of my papers was accepted for publication in a top journal after my dossier was sent to external reviewers. What should I do?

- o It's never too late to present something positive.
 - o If there's enough time, your chair can write a cover letter to the reviewers and include a copy of the paper.
 - o If it's too late to send the paper to the reviewers, the paper can still be considered when your department and other internal committees are considering your candidacy. Make sure your chair knows about the paper and is able to make a good case for why it should be considered.

12. Can I ask to see the letter that my chair writes to external reviewers?

- o Chairs generally do not share these letters, though they may. You should, however, always treat your chair as an ally and talk to your chair.
 - o Be smart when talking to your chair. Don't dwell on your weaknesses or fears. Present yourself in a positive light so that it will be easy for your chair to write a letter that will help your candidacy.
 - o An experienced chair should know that she or he needs to point out, in the letter that goes out, that Hunter is a teaching-intensive institution with a short tenure clock and a big teaching load, but it can't hurt to gently remind him or her.

13. How can I ensure that my chair does a good job of presenting my case?

- o You can never be sure, but most chairs are strong advocates for their candidates. You can increase the likelihood of a good result by treating your chair as an ally and educating your chair. Make sure that your chair knows
 - o enough about your work so that she or he can talk intelligently about it. Your chair also needs to be able to explain why your work is important. A well-written research statement is important, but talk to your chair to make sure that he or she understands your research and its significance.
 - o why the people you have suggested as potential external reviewers are good letter writers. Provide your chair with a brief bio (2-3 sentences) of each person you list. Make sure the bio highlights the prominence of the person in your field. At most schools, the prestige of the letter writer's institution matters. If the best programs in your field are not at the most prestigious schools, make sure your chair knows that the letter writers nevertheless come from the best programs.

14. How are teaching, research, and service weighted in tenure and promotion decisions?

- o For tenure, research, teaching, and service are all taken into consideration. Collegiality may even be considered. Research is given a great deal of weight. Poor teaching evaluations – by students or peers – will be a negative factor.
- o For promotion, research and scholarship are the most important factors. Teaching and service are minor.

15. How is the quality of my research and scholarship assessed?

- o It depends on your field – and sometimes even your sub-field. In the natural sciences, and in many of the social sciences, peer-reviewed journal articles are the gold standard.
 - o If you are not sure how quality is assessed in your field, talk to people who should know (e.g., your chair, senior members of your department, colleagues who have

recently gone through the tenure or promotion process, senior people in your field outside of Hunter).

- o Help your chair and your reviewers understand the importance of your work. For example, if the impact ratings of the journals in which you have published are high, include them. If your articles have been well-cited, include that statistic. Positive reviews of your grants or books are also helpful.

16. Can I appeal a negative tenure or promotion decision?

- o Yes. The appeal process is available from the Office of the Provost.
- o You can choose to stop the promotion process at any step in the process (e.g., after a negative vote by your department or the division). It is probably better, however, to informally “feel out” your department ahead of time to determine if you are likely to be successful. Talk to your chair, members of your departmental committee who will be involved in the decision, and other senior members of your department. Also consider talking to chairs of other departments in your division.
- o You cannot stop the tenure process unless you request and obtain a break in service, which will reset the tenure clock. Obtaining a break in service is complicated and involves your department, higher-level administrators, and the Office of Human Resources.

17. What is a circle of advisors? How do I go about forming one?

- o With a process as important and complex as tenure and promotion, one should seek the advice of a number of people. Advisors can serve many roles (e.g., feedback provider, role model, sounding board). It is unlikely that a single person can play all roles at all times. Having a circle of advisors that includes people with different perspectives, areas of expertise, and skills makes it more likely that one’s needs will be met. Relying on different people for different things also ensures that you don’t overwhelm any one person with your needs. When it comes to tenure and promotion, your department chair should be an important member of your circle of advisors.
- o To create a circle of advisors you should first create a list of your needs (e.g., motivation, feedback). Then you should create a list of people who you think can help you with your needs. Finally, look at the two lists side by side and see who can fulfill which role.
- o It is better to ask people to help you with short-term things (e.g. provide feedback on a grant proposal, read a rejection letter) than to ask them to be your mentor or advisor. People are typically more willing to do specific time-constrained actions than to make a long term commitment.
- o Your circle of advisors should change as your needs change.