Supplemental Instructions for HHS Unit Heads
About Faculty Promotion Documents
Prepared by Tom Berndt, Susie Swithers, and Gloria Powell
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To assist both junior faculty who are writing their promotion documents and the senior faculty who are assisting them, a set of PowerPoint slides with the title, “Instructions for HHS Promotion Documents” has been created (at https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/faculty/promotion_tenure.html). The slides include repeated references to the head’s role in helping junior faculty with the documents that are submitted to campus promotion committees. Therefore, those slides are an essential resource for unit heads who are assisting with promotion documents.

However, because the slides are intended primarily to help junior faculty, they say little about three parts of the promotion process that are the primary responsibility of the unit heads who chair primary committees. Part 1 is the brief section of President’s Form 36 that provides the head’s comments on the promotion candidate. Part 2 is the portion of the recent “guidance for evaluating faculty productivity in light of the pandemic” (at https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/covid-evaluation.html) that is specifically for promotion committee members and their chairs. Part 3 is the solicitation of letters of evaluation of the promotion candidate from experts at other institutions. Those three parts of the promotion process are the focus of this document. “Text that is new or revised for this version of the document is underlined in red type.”

Part 1 – “Comments by Head of Department (or School)”

Item 9 of President’s Form 36 is for “Comments by Head of Department (or School).” Specific instructions for Item 9 come from the “Instructions for Use with President’s Form 36” (at https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/faculty/promotion_tenure.html) and from a document that Peter Hollenbeck, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, sent to the chairs of primary and area promotion committees in August 2020.

The Form 36 instructions say that the head’s comments for Item 9 “normally . . . will be evaluative in nature because factual data are to be presented in attached pages.” They add, “The department head should offer their assessment of the candidate’s scholarship and excellence in Discovery, Learning, and Engagement as appropriate.” They conclude that “The department head must record his/her recommendation with an ‘X’ and affix his/her signature.” Almost always, heads should comment on the vote of the primary committee and on the evaluations of the external experts. Those comments should generally fit in the space provided and should continue onto an additional page only under extraordinary circumstances.
Peter Hollenbeck provided “informal guidance” for the head’s comments in an August 21, 2020 email message. The guidance was specifically for heads who endorsed a nomination for promotion “despite various apparent weaknesses in the case.” His comments are clear and comprehensive, so they are quoted in full:

“Dear Colleagues,

As the 2020-21 promotion and tenure cycle looms ahead of us, I would like to address an issue with you as the chairs of the primary and area committees: the summary sections on the front page of form 36. These comments from heads and deans are important for members of the committee at the next stage to understand how the previous committees arrived at their votes, and how the chairs arrived at their recommendations in each case. In 2019-20, as in past years, the majority of the head’s and dean’s summaries on the form 36 were very clear, and expedited the handing of the case at the next level. Indeed, a lot of them were slam-dunks: of the cases that arrived at the campus promotions committee, fully half had had unanimous votes at their primary committee; nearly 60% did at their area committee.

However, a minority of cases were recommended to the next level for approval despite various apparent weaknesses in the case: mixed votes at one or both levels; questions about the strength of an aspect of the impact; less-than-unanimous support from external referees. In order for these worthy cases to be evaluated accurately when they move forward, it is essential that committee chairs summarize the reasons for their positive endorsement. This could mean relaying and critiquing the reasons for a minority of negative votes, explaining why the majority view was fair and accurate, or rationalizing one or more negative external reviewers. I offer here a couple of fictional, generic examples of helpful reasoning that might appear in a form 36 summary for cases such as these:

"The primary committee was split, 6 voting against promotion and 16 in favor. These negative votes reflected questions about the impact of Dr. Smith’s research, which is broadly interdisciplinary. Although she could be viewed as a zoologist like her colleagues, her work in fact spans evolutionary biology, development, physiology and behavior, as well as traditional zoology, and is published in top journals across these varied fields. Although this interdisciplinary impact is highly valued by the Department of Zoology, some committee members who have a more traditional disciplinary focus tend to overlook impact outside of their specialty. This caused them to discount some of her most highly-cited work, and produced a number of negative votes. It is also important to note that her letters came from eminent zoologists at AAU aspirational peer institutions and were uniformly positive and recommended promotion. I strongly concur with the letters and the majority of the committee who felt that the breadth, quantity, and impact of her published research warrants her promotion to Associate Professor."

"Professor Jones works in the area of Oenology and has made major contributions to two problems in the field: (i) the tightness issue in bottle corking and its implications for breakage/product loss and ullage; (ii) the early detection and
control of the bunch rot fungus Botrytis cinerea. His letter writers all point to the high quality and impact of his work, although a few (3 out of 9), while generally positive, point out that his quantity of publications could be higher given time since the last promotion. However, I note that referees from the top institutions on the list are actually the most enthusiastic about his record, and clearly appreciate the contributions of the work. The discussion in the primary and area committee reflected the letters, in that it noted the high quality of his published research, but was somewhat critical of the quantity, which some viewed as low. I would add that his teaching is outstanding, his mentorship exemplary, and his service to the department and college has been frequent and effective. I settle at the position of 80% of the primary and area voters, and 6 distinguished referees from outstanding institutions, and strongly support his case for promotion to full Professor of Viticulture.”

Part 2 - COVID-Related Guidance for Promotion Committees

The recent University “guidance for evaluating faculty productivity in light of the pandemic” (at https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/covid-evaluation.html) that is specifically for promotion committee members and their chairs is stated succinctly, so the relevant portions of it are simply quoted below.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of the University’s operation and, in turn, every faculty member. We are deeply committed to the well-being and success of our faculty and acknowledge the differential and, in many cases, negative impacts of the pandemic on their work and career development. Therefore, in considering decisions about promotion and tenure, the University must evaluate each candidate’s research, teaching, engagement, and service activities within the context of the pandemic.

Toward that end, beginning in Fall 2021, promotion candidates will have an opportunity to describe how the pandemic has affected their professional accomplishments in the areas of research, teaching, engagement, and service in a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement. In addition, the Provost’s Office will recommend language to use when soliciting external letters, to remind evaluators of the pandemic’s impact. These considerations will remain in place through AY 2025-26.

Rationale:

For academic promotion at Purdue, we assess both the record of achievements of faculty candidates and their potential for the future (“a sustainable and impactful record”). For example, for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, our policy states that the candidate must demonstrate “a significant record of accomplishment...and promise of continued professional growth and recognition.” In weighing the promotion to Full Professor, the University also evaluates whether the candidate has fulfilled that potential.
We recognize that during the pandemic period, circumstances beyond our control have in many cases changed both the distribution of faculty effort and what can be achieved in discovery, teaching, and engagement. This in turn affects the amount of information available to make our collective judgment about a faculty member’s future trajectory. We must accept that our inferences about a promotion candidate’s potential could be based on less information than in the past. We cannot simply rely on our traditional milestones and markers, but must take care to evaluate the candidate’s record in light of the challenges created by the pandemic.

While the information available to make these important decisions about promotion and tenure has changed, our standards have not changed. The University still expects excellence, as demonstrated by visible, meaningful, and impactful contributions to the research, teaching, and engagement missions of our institution.

And so, we expect promotion and tenure evaluation committees to consider the specific impacts COVID-19 has presented for individual faculty members and to evaluate their records holistically and in context. While in a real sense this is what we expect every year in the evaluation of candidates for promotion and tenure, it has never been more important than at this time, given the widely differing ways that COVID-19 has affected individual faculty.

**Implementation:**

1) Attend to the Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement of each faculty member who submits one. This will be an addition to the promotion document and will not displace other content.

2) Note the range and depth of specific obstacles to faculty productivity, and note the Provost’s statement. Recognize that COVID-19 had widely varying impacts across our faculty. Attend to how each candidate overcame these obstacles.

3) Be cognizant of the additional effort required for faculty to pivot their teaching modality, and to other potential burdens associated with carrying out their teaching, research, engagement, and service responsibilities under the conditions of the past year. Recognize all that they did to keep their department, college, and Purdue operating during the pandemic.

4) Be cautious in the assessment of teaching evaluations for terms affected by the pandemic. Faculty will have faced changing their teaching modality as well as managing highly stressed students, and different faculty will have had to adapt or accommodate to different degrees. Note that for the disrupted spring 2020 semester, the University suspended summative evaluations completely.
5) “Bracket” the COVID-19-effect era, consider where it falls along each candidate’s career trajectory and, in subsequent years, how far out its effects persist.

6) For fair and equitable assessment of each promotion candidate’s impact and potential, evaluation decisions for promotion should be:

a. Individual (as always)

b. Holistic (as always)

c. Forward-looking (candidate’s future potential)

d. Discipline-specific, discipline-informed (they know best what has been possible)

e. Guided by our clear principles and language, both central and local.”

More information about the Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement is provided in the “Instructions for HHS Promotion Documents” that was mentioned earlier.

**Part 3 - Letters from Outside Referees**

A few sentences about the letters of evaluation of promotion candidates by experts from other institutions (described informally as outside referees) are in the Additional Information section of the “Instructions for Use with President’s Form 36.” More detailed instructions are in the Promotion and Tenure Provost’s Memos for 2022-23. Memos for tenure-track/tenured faculty, clinical/professional faculty, and research faculty are available at [https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/index.html](https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/index.html). These memos address three issues concerning the letters by outside referees: (1) the selection of the referees, (2) the solicitation of letters from them, and (3) the placement of those letters and some related materials in a promotion document.

In the following paragraphs, statements taken directly from the provost’s memos are printed in regular type; any instructions specific to HHS are printed in **boldface**. In addition, the recent “guidance for evaluating faculty productivity in light of the pandemic” (at [https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/covid-evaluation.html](https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/covid-evaluation.html)) states that, in some cases, a paragraph about how Purdue is evaluating promotion cases in the wake of the pandemic should be included in the solicitation letter sent to outside referees. Those instructions are included in point 3 of the section below entitled “Requirements for Solicitation Letters.”

**Selecting the Outside Referees**

1. Letters from outside referees should be obtained for all tenure and/or promotion candidates. These letters should be sought from experts at universities that are considered as peers or aspirational peers of Purdue University. Examples of the peer and aspirational peer institutions include members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) [see
Letters may also be sought from faculty members at top academic programs from other institutions, and from preeminent experts at other institutions, although justification in the form of expertise credentials is expected in the latter case.

In other words, if letters are obtained from experts who are not at peer institutions and not at highly-ranked programs at other universities, the experts’ credentials must be described explicitly. However, the promotion document should always include a summary of the credentials of all outside referees. See Point 7 of the section below on the placement of the outside referees’ letters.

2. Although the provost’s memo does not refer to the rank of the experts at peer institutions, they should normally be full professors.

3. Some statements about the criteria for promotion refer to a faculty member’s international reputation, so experts from universities or other institutions outside the United States may be identified as potential referees. Because the promotion process at universities outside the U.S. is often very different from that at U.S. universities, heads are advised to include no more than one referee who is outside the U.S.

4. It is essential to obtain unbiased external evaluations, so the letters should come from distinguished scholars who are not: the candidate’s thesis advisor (MS or PhD), or postdoctoral advisor; a business or professional partner; any family relation such as spouse, sibling, parent or relative; a collaborator on a substantive project, book, article, paper or report within the last 24 months.

5. Promotion candidates should have an opportunity to suggest letter writers and to identify potential letter writers who should not be asked. Someone other than the candidate should select some of the outside referees. Usually, other suggestions for outside referees come from the head or from other senior faculty in the unit. The promotion document should indicate whether each outside referee was suggested by the candidate, by the head or other faculty, or by both.

6. For all HHS promotion candidates (i.e., for tenure-track, tenured, clinical/professional, and research faculty), promotion documents should include a minimum of five letters from outside referees. At least three of these letters should be from outside referees suggested by the head or other faculty, or by both the candidate and the head or other faculty.

7. Heads may request more than five letters to ensure that they have at least five letters by the deadline for consideration of the case by the primary committee. (No letters received after the primary committee meeting may be added to the promotion document after that meeting.)
If a head requests and receives more than five letters, all of these letters must be included in the promotion document.

8. **Tracking the number of individuals who are asked to provide letters of evaluation but who decline to do so, ultimately fail to do so, and/or state their reasons for declining to do so does not provide relevant, useful information about the quality of a promotion candidate’s case. Therefore, such information should not be included in a promotion document.**

9. **When a promotion candidate has a joint appointment in another academic unit, the head of the other unit is invited to provide the head of the unit that is the tenure home with a letter of evaluation of the performance and achievements of the candidate from the perspective of that unit. This letter should not include a recommendation for or against promotion and/or tenure. If provided, this letter will be included in the candidate’s promotion document after the letters of outside referees, and a brief explanation for including it should be part of the page of information about the referees that precedes their letters.**

10. **Individuals whose relationships with a promotion candidate prevent them from serving as outside referees (see Point 4 above) may provide a “letter of information” for inclusion in the promotion document, but such letters are atypical.** For example, a letter from a collaborator who is clearly identified can help to define and evaluate the candidate’s role in major collaborative work. **If such a letter is included in the promotion document, a brief explanation for including it should be provided in the page of information that precedes the copies of the outside referees’ letters, and the letter of information should be placed after the referees’ letters. Alternatively, the letter may be included among the supporting materials made available to primary committee members. (See Section III.A.4 of the HHS Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures.)**

**Placement of the Outside Referees’ Letters of Evaluation and Related Materials**

1. According to the Form 36 instructions, the letters of outside referees should be placed at the end of the promotion document under the heading, “Additional Information.”

2. **This section should include the heading “Additional Information” and begin with one or two paragraphs that describe each outside referee.**

3. **Referees should be listed in alphabetical order by referee last name.**

4. **The description begins with the name, title, and affiliation of the referee.**
5. It continues by indicating whether the referee was suggested by the candidate, by the head or other senior faculty, or by both.

6. The relationship, if any, of the referee to the candidate is described. Relationships which exist outside of the 24-month period which would preclude their serving as a referee should be briefly described. If no relationship exists, the head can state simply that, “There is no personal or professional relationship between the letter writer and the candidate.”

7. Next, a summary of the referee’s academic credentials is provided. The summary should be relatively brief; promotion committee members just want to know that the letter writer is a recognized expert in the field.

8. The pages describing the outside referees are followed by a sample of the solicitation letter sent to the referees.

9. The final pages of the promotion document are copies of the letters from the outside referees. These letters should be in alphabetical order by the writer’s last name and should be printed on the letterhead of the university or other institution with which the writer is affiliated. Referees can submit their letters electronically, but each letter must have the referee’s signature. (In other words, referees do not need to send “hard” or printed copies of their letters to the unit head by regular mail, but an electronic or hand-written signature is needed.) Finally, the pages of these copies need a footer that indicates their page number in the promotion document.

Requirements for Solicitation Letters

1. The letter sent by the unit head (or another senior faculty member) soliciting an evaluation of a promotion candidate should include the following text from the provost’s memos about faculty promotion:

   “Candidates may request a summary of all evaluations in their file. However, sources remain confidential. We cannot guarantee that at some future time a court or government agency will not require the disclosure of the source of confidential evaluations. Purdue University will endeavor to protect the identity of authors of letters of evaluation to the fullest extent allowable under law.”

2. Some candidates for promotion and tenure will have received an extension of the tenure clock by virtue of University policy. Under these circumstances, the criteria for promotion and tenure are the same as those expected for a faculty member who has not received a tenure clock extension. The same is true for those being considered earlier than is typical. To ensure that our external referees are aware that we hold all promotion cases to the same criteria, the following statement must be included in every request for an external review
letter for a candidate for tenure (i.e., for candidates who are tenure-track assistant professors or untenured associate professors):

“Please note that length of service in rank by itself is not a factor in promotion and/or tenure decisions at Purdue. Our criteria clearly state: “…issues of timing should not be paramount, and discussions should focus instead on the question of whether the faculty member has provided evidence of a sustainable and impactful record that warrants promotion and/or tenure...” We do not designate any promotion nomination to be “early” (records are ready for promotion or they are not), nor are any extensions of the tenure clock granted to a faculty member to be considered in the decision.”

3. As noted above, a special paragraph must be included in solicitation letters when promotion candidates have added a COVID impact statement to their promotion documents:

“Purdue University acknowledges the differential and negative impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on faculty career development. In carrying out decisions about promotion and tenure, we will evaluate each candidate’s research, teaching, service, and engagement activities within the context of the pandemic. To this end, candidates have had an opportunity to include in their document a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement, which documents how the pandemic has affected their professional accomplishments in discovery, teaching, and engagement, as well as their service obligations. To assist in your evaluation, we include this statement in the promotion document with which you have been provided. It presents information about what obstacles were faced by this candidate during the COVID year and how they overcame them, and helps to put their impact during that year into the context of what was possible.”

4. It is useful to include in a solicitation letter a request for information about the referee’s relationship with the candidate, and for the referee’s CV or a biographical summary.

5. Along with the solicitation letter, outside referees should receive materials that provide a reasonable sampling of a candidate’s work. Usually, referees for candidates nominated for promotion on the basis of Discovery receive a selection of the candidate’s journal articles. Referees for promotion candidates nominated on the basis of Learning or Engagement receive other types of supporting materials. All materials sent to outside referees should be made available to primary committee and area committee members before their meetings to vote on the candidates. In HHS, those materials will be made available to Area Committee members through the HHS SharePoint site.

The following examples of solicitation letters may be useful to heads.
Dear Dr.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to write a letter of evaluation regarding the scholarly accomplishments of Assistant Professor X, who is being considered for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure in the Department of Y. To assist you in your evaluation, I have enclosed Dr. X’s promotion document and five publications chosen by Dr. X as representative of her/his work. If you would like copies of any other publications listed on the enclosed document, please let me know and I will send them to you immediately.

At Purdue University, a successful candidate for promotion to Associate Professor will have a significant record of accomplishment as a faculty member and show promise of continued professional growth and recognition. In particular, we want your opinion of the importance of Dr. X’s work, its range and depth, and the quality of its presentation. Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to conduct independent research? Has the candidate initiated a research program that has or will have significant impact on the field? Does Dr. X’s scholarship represent the work of a person who has the potential to achieve a position of leadership in the field? Finally, I would appreciate knowing whether you would recommend Dr. X for promotion to Associate Professor at a major research university like Purdue. Your frank evaluation is an essential part of our review process.

(INCLUDE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IF THE CANDIDATE IS A TENURE-TRACK ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OR AN UNTENURED ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR:) Please note that length of service in rank by itself is not a factor in promotion and/or tenure decisions at Purdue. Our criteria clearly state: “...issues of timing should not be paramount, and discussions should focus instead on the question of whether the faculty member has provided evidence of a sustainable and impactful record that warrants promotion and/or tenure...” We do not designate any promotion nomination to be “early” (records are ready for promotion or they are not), nor are any extensions of the tenure clock granted to a faculty member to be considered in the decision.

(INCLUDE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IF THE PROMOTION DOCUMENT SENT TO THE OUTSIDE REFEREE INCLUDES A CANDIDATE’S PROFESSIONAL COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT) Purdue University acknowledges the differential and negative impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on faculty career development. In carrying out decisions about promotion and tenure, we will evaluate each candidate’s research, teaching, service, and engagement activities within the context of the pandemic. To this end, candidates have had an opportunity to include in their document a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement, which
documents how the pandemic has affected their professional accomplishments in discovery, teaching, and engagement, as well as their service obligations. To assist in your evaluation, we include this statement in the promotion document with which you have been provided. It presents information about what obstacles were faced by this candidate during the COVID year and how they overcame them, and helps to put their impact during that year into the context of what was possible.

Your evaluation will become a part of Dr. X’s promotion documentation, which will be shared with those faculty and administrators directly participating in the promotion process. Candidates may request a summary of all evaluations in their file. However, sources remain confidential. We cannot guarantee that at some future time a court or government agency will not require the disclosure of the source of confidential evaluations. Purdue University will endeavor to protect the identity of authors of letters of evaluations to the fullest extent allowable under law.

We would also appreciate knowing the extent of your relationship, if any, with Dr. X. Additionally, please send with your letter a short bio or CV so that we may accurately portray your academic credentials.

We would very much appreciate receiving your letter by September 15, 20XX. Please do not hesitate to contact me (phone 765-49X-X; e-mail X@purdue.edu) if you have any questions or need additional information. Thank you very much for your time and effort in helping us review Dr. X’s credentials for promotion.

Sincerely,

X, Ph.D.
Professor
Example 2
X XX, 20XX

Dr. X
Department of
University of
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear Dr. X,

I greatly appreciate your willingness to write a letter of evaluation regarding the scholarly accomplishments of Associate Professor X, who is being considered for promotion to Full Professor in the Department of Y. To assist you in your evaluation, I have enclosed Dr. X’s promotion document and five publications chosen by Dr. X as representative of her/his work. If you would like copies of any other publications listed on the enclosed document, please let me know and I will send them to you immediately.

At Purdue University, successful candidates for promotion to Full Professor are recognized as authorities in their fields of specialization by external colleagues nationally and/or internationally. Therefore, we would be especially interested in your evaluations of the quality of Dr. X’s research, its impact on the field, and her/his potential for continued scholarly contributions. I would also appreciate knowing whether you would recommend Dr. X for promotion to Full Professor at a major research university like Purdue. Your frank evaluation is an essential part of our review process.

(INCLUDE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IF THE PROMOTION DOCUMENT SENT TO THE OUTSIDE REFEREE INCLUDES A CANDIDATE’S PROFESSIONAL COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT) Purdue University acknowledges the differential and negative impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on faculty career development. In carrying out decisions about promotion and tenure, we will evaluate each candidate’s research, teaching, service, and engagement activities within the context of the pandemic. To this end, candidates have had an opportunity to include in their document a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement, which documents how the pandemic has affected their professional accomplishments in discovery, teaching, and engagement, as well as their service obligations. To assist in your evaluation, we include this statement in the promotion document with which you have been provided. It presents information about what obstacles were faced by this candidate during the COVID year and how they overcame them, and helps to put their impact during that year into the context of what was possible.

Your evaluation will become a part of Dr. X’s promotion documentation, which will be shared with those faculty and administrators directly participating in the promotion process. Candidates may request a summary of all evaluations in their file. However, sources remain confidential. We cannot guarantee that at some future time a court or government agency will not require the disclosure of the
source of confidential evaluations. Purdue University will endeavor to protect the identity of authors of letters of evaluations to the fullest extent allowable under law.

We would also appreciate knowing the extent of your relationship, if any, with Dr. X. Additionally, please send with your letter a short bio or CV so that we may accurately portray your qualifications.

We would very much appreciate receiving your letter by September 15, 20XX. Please do not hesitate to contact me (phone 765-49X-X; e-mail X@purdue.edu) if you have any questions or need additional information. Thank you very much for your time and effort in helping us review Dr. X’s credentials for promotion.

Sincerely,

X, Ph.D.
Professor