GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING REFEREES

See: Procedures for Selection of and Communication with External and Internal Referees for Clinician Educators (SPS B6) and T&P Policy – Section III, Clause 14


GENERATION OF THE LIST OF POTENTIAL REFEREES

- The Department Chair, in consultation with senior colleagues, draws up a list of at least six possible referees known for their work in the relevant field. In the case of a faculty member who participates in a Program, the Director of the Program should be consulted. In all cases, advice from the candidate may be sought, but the candidate should not simply be asked to draw up the list of potential referees.

- In many cases, the people who would be able to provide the most insight into a faculty member’s clinical scholarly activities are those who could pose a conflict of interest. This is especially true in small departments and in very specialized areas of clinical expertise. In these instances, the Departmental Committee will use their best judgment when seeking referees and will clearly identify and explain any potential for conflict of interest for any of the people included in the list of potential referees.

- For CAWAR/Tenure – these referees can be internal or external.

- For Promotion to Professor, Promotion of faculty, who have been identified as Clinician Educators, to the rank of Professor requires letters from at least three referees external to the University. Referees must be individuals who have attained a respected national or international reputation in the appropriate fields, and can assess whether the candidate is known widely on the basis of scholarship.

- Although it is preferable for referees for the Clinician Educator to be at “arm’s length” this not always possible. Excellence in clinical contributions can sometimes require evaluation on the part of a colleague who has collaborated in, for example, the development of clinical practice guidelines. Consequently, these external referees will clarify the nature of this relationship to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. However, current collaboration will be precluded.

- The Department Chair compares the potential referees against the candidate’s CV and completes the referee approval forms confirming there is no conflict of interest and that the referees are at arm’s length.

- To avoid a possible conflict of interest:
  - Departments should avoid asking a faculty members who would directly benefit from the results of the tenure and promotion process.
  - Direct supervisors are usually seen as a conflict of interest, except in those cases where the direct supervisor also holds a leadership role within the department and is asked to comment based on that role.
  - Former students are not appropriate referees.
  - Other potential conflict of interests include (but are not limited to): personal and financial

- Except in unusual circumstances, a referee must already hold at least the rank or its equivalent for which the candidate is being considered.
CLINICIAN EDUCATOR

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE LIST OF POTENTIAL REFEREES

- The completed referee approval forms are submitted to the Dean with a copy of the candidate’s CV for further review and approval.
- After approval by the Dean, the candidate shall be shown this list and may object, and give reasons for objecting, to any person or persons on it. The candidate shall confirm in writing to the Chair that she or he has seen the list of candidates and has had an opportunity to register any objections.
- The Departmental Tenure and Promotion Committee shall consider any such objection(s), but shall retain the right to select the referee(s) in question and shall inform the Faculty Tenure and Promotion Committee of the objection(s) and its decision(s) concerning the referee(s)
See: Policy for Referees — Clinician Educator Faculty (SPS B9) and T&P Policy – Section III, 16

Templates of referee letters:
https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facultyrelations/documents/TemplateforClinEdletter-CAWAR-PromotoAssociate.docx
https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facultyrelations/documents/TemplateforClinEdletter-CAWAR.docx
https://fhs.mcmaster.ca/facultyrelations/documents/TemplateforClinEdletter-PromotoProfessor.docx

LETTER TO REFEREES

Standardized templates based on SPS B9 have been created and are linked to above.

Departments are asked to include a short paragraph describing the candidate and then use the template as is.

This paragraph should contain information regarding the candidate’s degrees, clinical specialty, area of education/research specialization and current appointment. Department’s should communicate the facts of their candidates’ careers as neutrally as possible when writing to potential referees. While a Department might take great pride in a candidate, it is not appropriate for the Chair to lead a potential referee to make a positive assessment by praising a candidate effusively and listing his or her achievements in glowing terms, or by indicating the Department’s hope that the candidate’s promotion request be successful.
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REFEREE LETTERS

See: Policy for Referees — Clinician Educator Faculty (SPS B9) and T&P Policy – Section III, 16

NUMBER OF LETTERS REQUIRED

A package cannot go forward to the Faculty Committee or the Senate Committee on Appointments with less than 3 external letters that are at arm’s length, with no conflict of interest.

Per policy - at least three external letters must be obtained, but all letters received must be made part of the file

Promotion to Professor requires letters from at least three referees external to the University. Referees must be individuals who have attained a respected national or international reputation in the appropriate fields, and can assess whether the candidate is known widely on the basis of scholarship.

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

If a referee writes something that is negative, or could be perceived to be negative by someone reviewing the file, this should be addressed in the departmental recommendation letter. It is better to raise the issue and refute it, than to ignore and have the issue raised by another committee.

USING REFEREE LETTERS

All referee letters should be acknowledged in the Departmental letter of recommendation. This can be done via quotes from the letters or simply by noting that referees X, Y, and Z were all in favour of the promotion request.