

Research Faculty Promotion External Review Request Guidelines

Requirements:

External reviewers must be from peer institutions or other major research universities:

- A listing of Virginia Tech's SCHEV-approved peer institutions is available at www.ir.vt.edu.
- If the best person to evaluate the work is at a university below peer level, *please explain*.

Recommendations:

Share departmental and Virginia Tech's criteria for promotion with the external reviewers:

Criteria for professorial research ranks may be found in Section 6.5 of the *Faculty Handbook*:

- Research assistant professors are expected to contribute significantly to the design and execution of research projects. They may serve as principal investigators with the approval of the department head. They carry out independent research in their field of specialization under general supervision. They may have supervisory responsibility for project personnel and contribute to project management.
- Research associate professors are typically responsible for design and execution of research projects and interpretation of research results. They are expected to serve as principal investigators and conduct independent research in their area of specialization. They may have significant supervisory responsibility for project personnel and contribute to project management. Promotion to this rank requires evidence of continuous professional development, documentation of excellence in their disciplinary field, contribution to research or creative activity supported through grants and contracts, and at least regional recognition.
- Research professors are typically responsible for design and execution of research projects and interpretation of research results. They are expected to serve as principal investigators and conduct independent research in their area of specialization. They may have significant supervisory responsibility for project personnel and contribute to project management. Promotion to this rank requires evidence of continuous professional development, documentation of excellence in their disciplinary field, outstanding research or creative activity supported by grants and contracts, and national and/or international recognition.

Request a review of scholarship and professional contributions from external reviewers:

- “Please provide a thorough, objective assessment of the candidate’s accomplishments as a scholar and an opinion as to whether the degree of accomplishment is appropriate for the level of research associate professor at a comprehensive land-grant university with high standards of achievement expected of its research faculty.”
- “We would appreciate both your overall impressions of the candidate’s research and scholarship and specific comments addressing the following issues:”
- “It would be helpful in your evaluation to rate the candidate’s scholarly and research achievements in comparison with other persons you have known at similar stages in their careers. Is the work of high quality? Does it reflect increasing maturity and depth? Does there appear to be potential for future growth?”
- “Is the candidate on a trajectory that suggests subsequent successful promotion to full professor? How do you assess her prospects for future development?”
- “Make a thorough and objective assessment of the candidate’s scholarship. Comment on the significance of the work produced and its impact on the field.”

Avoid requesting comments on the research program, teaching and university service, since that is evaluated at the departmental, college, and university levels. (Comments by external reviewers regarding the candidate’s professional service are welcome.)

- “Our decision will be based on several kinds of evidence, including a candidate’s contributions to the research, teaching (as applicable), service, and outreach missions of the university. Your evaluation of the candidate’s scholarship and professional contributions will form an important component in the dossier.”
- “We do not expect you to comment on the candidate’s teaching and university service activities.”
- “Contributions to teaching and service will certainly enter into our decision; however, we seek your help only in evaluating the candidate’s research.”

Avoid asking about “promotability” at the reviewer’s home institution; for example, do not ask:

- “Would you be pleased to have the candidate as a colleague with the rank of research associate professor at your institution?”
- “What is the likelihood that this candidate would qualify for promotion to research associate professor at your institution?”

Include the following statement concerning confidentiality:

- “The policy of Virginia Tech is to hold in confidence all letters of evaluation from persons outside the institution. Only the committees and administrative officers directly

responsible for the decision of concern here will have access to your letter. It will not be provided to the candidate, unless we are required specifically to do so by law.”

Please do *not* use statements such as:

- “Your letter will be kept strictly confidential, and at no time become part of a file to which the Freedom of Information Act would apply.” (The reference to the Freedom of Information Act is confusing and such letters are already exempt from FOIA. The only time that Virginia Tech is required to provide an external review letter to a candidate is if the document is under court-ordered subpoena.)
- “The candidate has relinquished his right of access to evaluations supplied by reviewers.” (Candidates don’t have a right to access outside evaluations. The department’s practice seems to imply that a candidate may choose to see the external evaluations.)
- “We will maintain strict confidentiality and destroy your letter when the evaluation process is complete.” (The statement leads the external reviewer to believe that all copies of his/her letter will be destroyed. The Office of the Executive VP and Provost is required to maintain promotion records for 5 years after the promotion or tenure decision.)