

University of Maine

Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion Support Letters

A. The Departmental Peer Committee Letter

1. Evaluation of Teaching

- Evaluate the faculty member's performance as a teacher and advisor of undergraduates (classroom, laboratory, office, special projects, etc.). Comment on strengths and weaknesses, student evaluation results, syllabi, and evaluations by colleagues.
- Evaluate the faculty member's role in the program of the department, college, and/or University.
- Evaluate the faculty member's performance as a graduate teacher and thesis advisor when applicable.
- Note any special efforts undertaken to enhance the effectiveness of the faculty member's teaching.

2. Evaluation of Scholarship

- Evaluate the quality of the faculty member's scholarly writing and the journals in which it appears. Which of these appear in the major refereed journals in his/her field?
- Assess the faculty member's regional, national, and/or international reputation in his/her field. Has the faculty member been sought out to review papers submitted for publication/presentation, grant proposals, and/or to serve as a member of a review panel?

3. Evaluation of Service

- Evaluate the faculty member's public service activities, both compensated and uncompensated, that utilize professional expertise. These should be activities carried out as a faculty member, rather than those performed as a citizen. Particular emphasis should be given to service that contributes to the economy, culture, and quality of life of citizens of Maine, the region, and the nation.
- Evaluate the faculty member's service to the department, if applicable, and to the University, school or college, or other committees.

B. Departmental Peer Committee: Recommendation/Recommended Action Document

- The dated recommendation should be prepared on separate departmental letterhead. It must list the names of the voting members of the committee along with their signatures, and be copied to the unit member.
- If the recommendation for action is not unanimous, the vote tally should be noted.
- The recommendation should include a notation that the faculty member received a copy.
- Recommendations for tenure before the end of the probationary period represent an exception to Board of Trustee policy. If this recommendation is an exception, the departmental peer committee evaluation should include a brief rationale for such an exception.

C. Other Support Letters

1. Letters internal to the Campus

Support letters should address one or more of the three areas of evaluation: teaching, scholarship, and service. To be most effective, these letters should describe substantial contributions and accomplishments related to the departmental/university mission and/or the discipline and body of work.

Teaching- Letters should be based on first-hand observation of the candidate in the classroom or in workshops, or based on review of teaching materials and syllabi.

Scholarship- Letters should be based on examination of the candidate's written and/or creative work as well as on scholarly discussions with the candidate or attendance at conference presentations where applicable.

Service- Letters should be based on first-hand experience with the candidate in some service activity. The service activity in question should be directly related to the candidate's academic expertise or to his/her collegial or governance role as a faculty member. In the area of service, two conditions on acceptable letters of support should be highlighted:

- For the purposes of tenure evaluation, service activities do not include activities that one engages in simply as a neighbor, organization member, or citizen. Service activities must relate directly to the academic expertise of the candidate or to institutional expectations of faculty members as participants in the governance and administration of their campus.
- Those who comment on service activities from outside the campus and the University of Maine System should have first-hand experience of the candidate's activities and have the relevant expertise to evaluate the candidate's performance.

2. Letters internal to the University of Maine System, but external to the campus

If comparable programs and faculty do not exist within the System, letters may be solicited from state agencies, colleges, laboratories, or museums within the State of Maine, if they employ individuals possessing similar academic credentials/attainment who perform work similar in both level and scope to the faculty member. The guidelines regarding teaching, scholarship, and service as detailed above should be followed. Support letters of a community service type are not appropriate and should not be included.

3. Letters external to the University of Maine System and external to the campus

The guidelines regarding teaching, scholarship and service as detailed above should be followed. The main function of the letters supplied in this section is to provide an independent, expert assessment of the candidate's scholarship and standing in the discipline.

In the area of service, two conditions on acceptable letters of support should be highlighted:

For the purposes of tenure evaluation, service activities do not include activities that one engages in simply as a neighbor, organization member, or citizen. Service activities must relate directly to the academic expertise of the candidate or to institutional expectations of faculty members as participants in the governance and administration of their campus.

Those who comment on service activities from outside the campus and the University of Maine System should have first-hand experience of the candidate's activities and have the relevant and appropriate expertise to evaluate the candidate's performance.

Corrected 11/20/2015