1. **SAMP****LE TENURE REVIEW LETTER (TO EXTERNAL LETTER WRITERS)**

<<Date>>

«FirstName» «LastName»

«Title»

«Address»

«University»

«City», «State» «Postal Code»

«Country»

Dear Professor «LastName»,

[If initial inquiry was sent: “Thank you for your response. As you know,”] We write to ask for your advice as we consider Professor [NAME] for promotion to tenured professor in the field of [FIELD] in the Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME] at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Harvard University. We would greatly appreciate your candid assessment of Professor [NAME]’s contributions and your recommendation as to whether or not Professor [NAME] should receive a tenured appointment at Harvard. If you have personal or professional connections with Professor [NAME], please note these in your response. In addition, if you previously wrote an evaluative letter for Professor [NAME]’s review for promotion to associate professor, please note that in your response.

Our criteria for tenure are: “demonstrated excellence in research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship and…the capacity to make significant and lasting contributions to the department(s) proposing the appointment. Candidates for this position should evince scholarly achievement and impact on the field, intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, teaching, advising, and mentoring effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students (and, as appropriate, researchers), contributions to the University community and broader scholarly community, and potential for future accomplishments in all these realms.” We seek to tenure faculty who are setting the agenda in their field, who are emerging as among the most influential figures in that field, and who have the commitment and capacity to remain at the forefront of their field.

At Harvard, tenure is granted only at the rank of full professor. Harvard does not have a set number of scholarly publications that must be completed to qualify for tenure. In your response, please focus on whether Professor [NAME] meets the tenure criteria above, rather than on any question of rank.

As part of your assessment, please situate Professor [NAME] in the field of [FIELD], relative to other scholars who are at different career stages. This is a benchmarking exercise, to help us understand Professor [NAME]’s current standing in and impact on the field, as well as their future trajectory. [Per Step 7a in 4A2, “Promotion to Tenured Professor,”[[1]](#footnote-1) the review committee may insert additional text here, as necessary,]

We have listed scholars below ranging from recently tenured colleagues to some of the most influential figures in the field. Professor [NAME] does not necessarily need to come out “on top” of the comparison list in order to merit tenure at Harvard; rather, your analysis will shed light on where Professor [NAME] currently stands in the field (and why) and where their trajectory suggests they may arrive in time. Please keep the career stage of each scholar in mind as you undertake these comparisons. When leaders in the field, at more advanced career stages, are comparands, the expectation is less that the candidate has also attained that standing (though that may be the case); of interest is the candidate’s trajectory.

The list we provide below is a starting point, to give you a sense of the caliber of comparand and the range of career stages that we feel will help us gauge Professor [NAME]’s standing in and impact on the field. Please feel free to substitute different comparands if you think that they would be more appropriate. In particular, who do you see as the leading scholars in this field (both at a comparable career stage to Professor [NAME] and at more advanced stages), and where does Professor [NAME] stand relative to these scholars, and why?

[Please list scholars in alphabetical order below.]

* [NAME], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], [HOME INSTITUTION], [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]
* [NAME], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], [HOME INSTITUTION], [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]
* [NAME OF CANDIDATE FOR PROMOTION], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], Harvard University, [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]
* [NAME], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], [HOME INSTITUTION], [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]
* [NAME], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], [HOME INSTITUTION], [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]

Since this is a tenure review of an internal candidate, none of the scholars listed above, with the exception of Professor [NAME], are under consideration for this position. These individuals are not aware that we have included their names in this review process. For that reason, we ask that you keep this letter confidential. If you substitute different scholars on the list, please continue to observe this confidentiality. If you have affiliations with any of the scholars in the final comparand list, please note these in your response.

As a practical matter, we respect your time, and you are not expected to read up on each comparand’s full body of work or summarize each person’s career in your comments. We are interested in your assessments of the strengths and weakness of [CANDIDATE]’s work relative to the work of the comparands, based on your existing knowledge. There is no need to provide a summary of each comparand’s scholarship. [INSERT AS APPROPRIATE, IF THE CANDIDATE IS INTERDISCIPLINARY: “We also recognize that Professor [NAME]’s work is interdisciplinary; if you wish, you may primarily comment on those aspects of their work most relevant to your expertise.”]

In addition, external evaluators often find it difficult to comment on the teaching, advising, mentoring, or service/citizenship of a colleague at another school. If this is the case regarding Professor [NAME], please feel free to not comment on these matters. The FAS is able to assess Professor [NAME]’s performance in these areas internally.

To aid your evaluations, we have enclosed a copy of Professor [NAME]’s *curriculum vitae*, teaching/advising/mentoring statement, research statement, service/citizenship statement, statement on overlap and joint authorship in publications, website link, [FOR BOOK FIELDS OR ART-MAKING FIELDS, INSERT “reviews,”] and a sampling of Professor [NAME]’s work.

[INSERT AS NEEDED: “With regard to the timing of this promotion review, please note that, with the significant disruptions to professional life resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, the FAS instituted in 2020, 2021, and 2022 policies giving tenure-track faculty the option of appointment extensions and a term of teaching relief. In keeping with these policies, the FAS gave Professor (NAME) a (INSERT NUMBER OF YEARS OR, IF LESS THAN ONE YEAR, NUMBER OF MONTHS) appointment extension (INSERT AS NEEDED: and a term of teaching relief). (INSERT AS NEEDED: In addition, the FAS gave Professor [NAME] a one-year appointment extension in keeping with its parental leave policies.)

Evaluators should assess Professor [NAME]’s aggregated scholarship, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship without any penalty for having received (CHOOSE ONE: an appointment extension/appointment extensions) (INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief). As Professor [NAME] was given a (INSERT NUMBER OF YEARS]-year [OR, IF LESS THAN ONE YEAR, NUMBER OF MONTHS]-month extension and thus came up for tenure in the (INSERT NUMBER OF YEARS, E.G., “tenth,” “ninth,” etc.) (rather than the ordinary seventh) year after their initial appointment date, their body of work should be evaluated according to a standard of someone who has had seven years to work towards tenure. All of the work that Professor [NAME] has done since the start of their appointment is evaluated as if they have done so on a clock unaffected by the pandemic (INSERT AS NEEDED: and parental leave). (INSERT AS NEEDED: Similarly, regarding teaching relief, Professor (NAME) should have their scholarship, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship evaluated as if they had taught the course for which they received relief.) COVID-related (INSERT AS NEEDED: and parental leave) clock extensions [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief] should not be counted against candidates in any way.”]

We will make every effort possible to keep your response confidential. We will make it available only to the senior members of the Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME] and others directly involved in the formal review process.

[If no initial inquiry was sent: “Please let us know by email ([EMAIL ADDRESS]) if you will be able to assist us in the evaluation process. If so,”] It would be most helpful to receive your letter by [DATE].

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Chair, Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME]

1. “Note: In rare cases where the candidate’s work is especially complex (e.g., at the convergence of several subfields) and where the comparand list may likewise be complex, the review committee will be allowed to add a brief sentence or two to the letter requesting external evaluations, more clearly explaining what aspect(s) of the candidate’s work the committee would like to hear about. Adding such language to the letter will be subject to divisional dean/SEAS dean approval. This proviso also applies to “internal external” letters (see Step 7b).” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)