**15QQ. SAMPLE FEEDBACK LETTER TO NEWLY PROMOTED ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**

Personal and Confidential

[MONTH, DATE, 20xx]

[ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR’S NAME]

[ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR’S ADDRESS]

Dear [ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR’S NAME],

I am delighted to inform you that you have been promoted to the position of Associate Professor, in the [DEPARTMENT] at Harvard University. On behalf of the tenured faculty, I offer you my warmest congratulations, and I wish you the best possible success in the coming years.

This letter constitutes our official notification regarding your promotion review. It also endeavors to provide helpful feedback as you move forward in your development as a scholar, teacher, advisor, mentor, and citizen at Harvard, and as you prepare for your eventual review for promotion to tenure.

In addition to this feedback letter, your colleagues look forward to meeting with you in person soon, to provide further feedback and mentoring based on your associate review. Please reach out to [NAME OF APPROPRIATE STAFF MEMBER] to schedule a meeting to occur in the next few weeks. In attendance will be you, me, [NAME], who chaired your review committee, and [NAME], in their capacity as your formal mentor. This meeting brings us all together to ensure not only that you receive feedback from all of us, but also that we hear what each other is saying, so that we are all on the same page.

Your appointment as an untenured Associate Professor of [DEPARTMENT] will extend from [DATE] to [DATE]. Your salary for academic year [YEAR] will be [$$]. Your review for possible promotion to tenure is currently scheduled to occur in academic year [20xx-20xx], the penultimate year of your appointment as Associate Professor. (As you know, promotion to Associate Professor at Harvard does not guarantee promotion to tenured Professor.) If your tenure review occurs on an accelerated schedule and does not result in promotion to tenure, your Associate Professor appointment would end one year after that review occurred, superseding the current end date of your contract.

The tenured faculty in the Department recommended your promotion to Associate Professor based on a thorough evaluation of your research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/ citizenship in the Department and the broader academic community. We have read and discussed all your materials, considered feedback from advisees and mentees and letters of evaluation from scholars, and have given serious collective thought to how we can best advise you moving forward. You have met Harvard’s criteria for Associate Professor, demonstrating, as the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* notes, “sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major research institution within three to five years.” In this letter, we will give you candid feedback on your work so far, and we’ll offer our considered advice on how you could build a strong case for tenure.

In each of the areas below, I’ll discuss the Department’s view of your current strengths and areas where you can continue to strengthen your record. It is the norm in associate reviews to provide *all* newly promoted Associate Professors with both positive feedback, as appropriate, and any concrete, constructive suggestions for strengthening their records. It is entirely up to you what, if any, of this advice makes sense to you and how you wish to proceed. We offer these comments as food for thought, as you chart a path forward.

You may find it helpful to view the feedback with the tenure criteria[[1]](#footnote-1) in mind. In particular, when you are reviewed for tenure, the FAS will be interested to understand the *impact* you are having in each area of your endeavors. Your mentor(s) and other senior colleagues can work with you in the coming years to help you heighten and articulate this impact.

[IN ADDRESSING THE BELOW, PLEASE INCLUDE ANONYMOUS QUOTES FROM THE EXTERNAL LETTERS AND FROM ANY LETTERS FROM COLLABORATORS AND MENTORS TO SUPPORT YOUR POINTS, AS HELPFUL]:

**1. Research**

* Strengths:

As a researcher, you [DESCRIBE THEIR STRENGTHS. E.G., ASSESS QUALITY, QUANTITY, IMPORTANCE, INNOVATION, FOCUS, IMPACT, TRAJECTORY, METHODOLOGY, ETC. OFFER DETAILED FEEDBACK ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS, PUBLICATIONS, ETC.].

* Areas that Could Be Strengthened and Some Possible Ways to Proceed:

In terms of strengthening your record, [AS APPROPRIATE, IDENTIFY AREAS FOR STRENGTHENING. E.G., ASSESS QUALITY, QUANTITY, IMPORTANCE, INNOVATION, FOCUS, IMPACT, TRAJECTORY, METHODOLOGY, ETC. OFFER DETAILED FEEDBACK ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS, PUBLICATIONS, ETC. IT IS HELPFUL TO SUMMARIZE POINTS, OR QUOTE FROM, EXTERNAL LETTERS]

Some concrete ways to strengthen your record as you progress toward the tenure review include: [PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT THEY MIGHT DO TO STRENGTHEN THEIR RECORD.]

As I mentioned above, it is entirely up to you whether or not you wish to act on any of these suggestions. These suggestions are also no promise or guarantee that, if you take such measures, your eventual review for tenure will be successful. Regardless of that promotion review, we offer these suggestions in the hope that they will help you strengthen your research program. This caveat applies equally to our comments about teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship below.

**2. Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring**

* Strengths:

As a teacher, advisor, and mentor, you [DESCRIBE THEIR STRENGTHS: E.G., CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE, PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION, ADVISING AND MENTORING OF UNDERGRADUATES, GRADUATE STUDENTS, POSTDOCS. SUMMARIZE STUDENT FEEDBACK].

* Areas that Could Be Strengthened and Some Possible Ways to Proceed:

In terms of strengthening your record, [AS APPROPRIATE, IDENTIFY AREAS FOR STRENGTHENING. E.G., CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE, PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION, ADVISING AND MENTORING OF UNDERGRADUATES, GRADUATE STUDENTS, POSTDOCS..]

Some concrete ways to strengthen your record as you progress toward the tenure review include: [PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT THEY MIGHT DO TO WORK TOWARDS STRENGTHENING.]

**3. Service/Citizenship**

* Strengths:

As a member of the Department and the broader academic community, you [DESCRIBE THEIR STRENGTHS: E.G., THEIR COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS, THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIVERSITY, BELONGING, AND INCLUSION IN ALL AREAS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIFE, AND THEIR COLLEGIALITY].

* Areas that Could Be Strengthened and Some Possible Ways to Proceed:

In terms of strengthening your record, [AS APPROPRIATE, IDENTIFY AREAS FOR STRENGTHENING. E.G., THEIR COMMITTEE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS, THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIVERSITY, BELONGING, AND INCLUSION IN ALL AREAS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIFE, AND THEIR COLLEGIALITY]

Some concrete ways to strengthen your record as you progress toward the tenure review include: [PROVIDE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT THEY MIGHT DO TO WORK TOWARDS STRENGTHENING.]

We encourage you to reach out, on an ongoing basis, to your faculty mentor, your department chair, and your other senior colleagues, as part of an evolving dialogue about your research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship.

In closing, allow me to congratulate you again on your promotion. We look forward to working with you in the years to come.

Sincerely,

[NAME OF DEPARTMENT CHAIR]

Cc: [NAME OF DIVISIONAL DEAN]

[NAME OF ASSISTANT DEAN]

[NAME OF FACULTY MENTOR]

1. As Chapter 4 in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* states, “Tenured professorial appointments are reserved for scholars of the first order of eminence who have demonstrated excellence in research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service/citizenship and who have 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. Past accomplishments or a general standard of merit are not sufficient for appointment. Candidates should ordinarily have a doctorate (with the exception, as appropriate, of appointments in the arts). Professors are expected to employ their time in teaching, advising, mentoring, scholarship, and the obligations of academic citizenship. These appointments are without limit of time and are at the rank of professor.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)