1. **SAMPLE LETTER TO EXTERNAL LETTER WRITERS FOR PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**

[REMOVE FROM FINAL LETTER: Template Version: 7/1/23]

<<Date>>

«MrMrs» «FirstName» «LastName»

«Title»

«Address»

«University»

«City», «State»

«PostalCode»

«Country»

Dear Professor «LastName»,

We write to ask for your advice as we consider Assistant Professor [NAME] for promotion to associate professor in the Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME] at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Harvard University. Please note that, at the FAS, associate professorships are untenured. We would greatly appreciate your candid assessment of Professor [NAME]’s contributions and promise and a specific recommendation as to whether or not Professor [NAME] should be promoted. If you have personal or professional connections with Professor [NAME], please note these in your response.

At the FAS, the standard for promotion to associate professor is “sufficient promise and achievement to potentially qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years.”[[1]](#footnote-1) We would appreciate hearing your views on Professor [NAME]’s eventual prospects for achieving tenure at Harvard. As a secondary matter, we would appreciate your assessment of whether Professor [NAME] may even qualify for tenure now. We expect that this would be very rare at this career stage. We also understand that we would need to undertake further review to make a rigorous determination.

As part of your assessment, please situate Professor [NAME] in the field of [FIELD], relative to other scholars in the field who are currently at a comparable career stage. In particular, who do you see as the leading scholars in Professor [NAME]’s cohort, and where does Professor [NAME] stand among them in terms of scholarly impact and promise, and why? [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.”] We also welcome your thoughts on any measures that Professor [NAME] could take to increase [his/her/their] impact in the [FIELD] in particular and in [AREA] more broadly.

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 evaluation, we have enclosed a copy of Professor [NAME]’s *curriculum vitae*, research statement, teaching/advising/mentoring statement, service/citizenship statement, statement on overlap and joint authorship in publications, and a selection of Professor [NAME]’s work.

[INSERT AS NEEDED: “With regard to the timing of this promotion review, please note that the FAS grants appointment extensions and teaching relief to tenure-track faculty, in keeping with its policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic, medical leave, and parental leave. Accordingly, the FAS gave Professor (NAME) (INSERT “one,” “two,” etc.) (INSERT “one-year” or the number of months) appointment extension(s) (INSERT AS NEEDED: and (INSERT NUMBER) term(s) of teaching relief).”]

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). Professor [NAME] should be evaluated as if they had had the ordinary four years from their initial appointment date to work towards associate promotion. (INSERT AS NEEDED: Similarly, regarding teaching relief, Professor (NAME) should be evaluated as if they had taught the course for which they received relief.) Clock extensions [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief] related to the pandemic, medical leave, or parental leave 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.

Please let us know by email ([EMAIL ADDRESS]) whether you plan to write a letter. If you are willing to write a letter, it would be most helpful to receive it by [DATE].

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Chair, Department of [DEPARTMENT NAME]

1. For reference, Harvard’s tenure criteria include “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. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)