

Policy on content of External Letters

Proposed policy (this content would be added to the 2nd paragraph of 5.3.3.1):

Letters soliciting outside review of a candidate's work must make clear what is to be covered by the reviewer. These letters sent by the department soliciting external reviews may optionally include or exclude asking reviewers their opinions about whether candidates would or should receive tenure and/or promotion at the reviewer's institution or at Iowa State University. The department must make any request regarding this summative question consistent for all candidates and all reviewers.

Proposed best practice:

With regard to the candidate's scholarship, the letter might request, for example, comments concerning its originality, impact, breadth, depth, or clarity. If the reviewer is to comment upon other areas of the candidate's professional work parallel and appropriate language should be spelled out for those areas (e.g., teaching, professional practice, extension activities, performances, service).

Background Information

As part of the S05-19, the senate passed a policy requiring that the letter soliciting outside review "should state that reviewers are not to give their opinions about whether candidates would or should receive tenure at the reviewer's institution or at Iowa State University." This was following recommended best practice at that time. However, there is a strong feeling within some programs that this question is the critical component of the external review. Thus, this policy was never approved by the Provost and President. The proposed policy presented here has been vetted with the administration and has received positive support.