



How to Prepare a Tenure and Promotion File

Office of the Faculty Council



Introduction



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Role of the FPC



The File Preparation Committee has the responsibility of assembling a file which is complete and which fairly and accurately reflects the candidate's academic career at York and/or elsewhere. It will be responsible for presenting diverse career paths fairly and effectively, so that candidates' professional contribution and standing, teaching and service can be equitably assessed.

(F.3.1.1 of the University *Tenure and Promotions Policy, Criteria and Procedures*)



Contents of the File



The minimum contents of a candidate's application for tenure and/or promotion are documented in F.3.1.5 of the University *Tenure and Promotions Policy, Criteria and Procedures*.



Keeping the Candidate Informed



FPCs are encouraged to meet with the candidate initially to discuss the process for preparing the file. This allows all parties to:

- Review the curriculum vitae and optional personal statement
- Discuss potential referees
- Discuss the material to be sent to referees
- Address questions or concerns with the process

The FPC and candidate compile lists of potential referees in each area; there is no requirement to solicit all potential referees on the list. At least one of the candidate's referees should be solicited for each section of the file.



Assembling the File



Timeline

- FPC established in early winter (January/February of the year in which the candidate is coming forward)
- File should be fully assembled by the end of September, and the FPC should add its commentary to the file shortly thereafter
- The file should move to adjudication in October for a recommendation to be made by no later than November 1



Assembling the File



Teaching – Collegial Referees (F.3.1.2a)

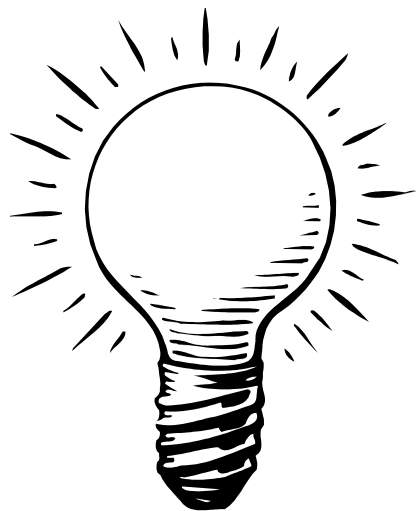
- Two referees will be selected by the FPC and one by the candidate
- Referees shall be provided with copies of course outlines, assignments and handouts, and other such materials as the candidate deems relevant (e.g., teaching dossier)



Assembling the File



Best practices for collegial (teaching) referees:



Ask collegial referees to observe the candidate before the end of classes and at an appropriate point in the course (preferably before classes move into student presentations or exam preparation).

Plan teaching observations early in the event that the candidate will be on leave during part of the tenure process or if he/she does not teach during the summer.

Organize collegial referees to observe different class formats on different dates wherever possible.



Assembling the File



Teaching – Student Referees (F.3.1.2b)

- Compile a random sample of student names to comment on the candidate's teaching (undergraduate, graduate or previously supervised)
- The candidate may add additional names to comprise up to one-third of the total number of students solicited

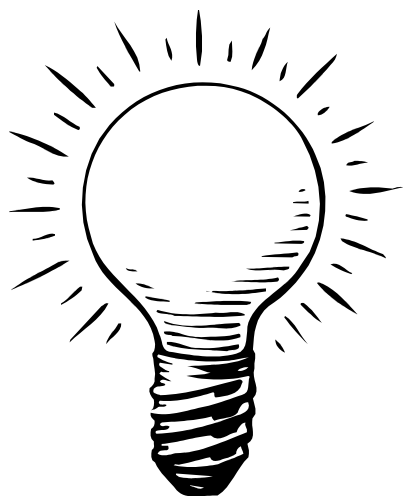
Note: where a candidate has taught small classes or not many classes, the students are blanketed and the candidate need not supply names. Such cases should be made very clear in the FPC commentary.



Assembling the File



Best practices for soliciting student referees:



Solicit student referees early in the year (e.g. March/April) to increase the likelihood of responses; response rates are normally lower during the summer months.

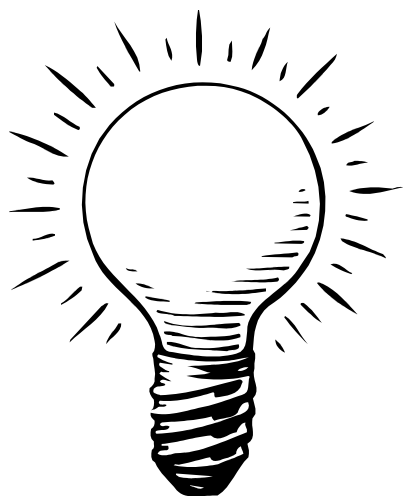
If the initial response rate is low, the FPC should follow up with reminders, and could perhaps consider writing to additional students. If the response rate is still low, the FPC should be sure to include in its commentary a description of what steps it took to solicit letters.



Assembling the File



Best practices for soliciting student referees:



Only signed letters shall be included in the file; electronic submissions are acceptable as long as the electronic signature (name, student number, email address) clearly identifies the student (i.e. johnsmith@yorku.ca).

Should electronic submissions be included in the file, the email should be printed out and added to the file to act as a cover page and signature for the student's letter.

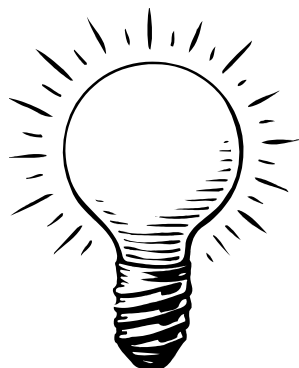


Assembling the File



Teaching – Student Course Evaluations (F.3.1.2b)

- Units are encouraged to ensure that student evaluations of teaching are collected in each year for probationary faculty



Compile data for all available student course evaluations.

Where possible, summarize course evaluation data into charts that compare the candidate to the departmental/faculty means. Raw data is difficult to interpret.



Assembling the File



Professional Contribution and Standing (F.3.1.3)

- The FPC compiles a list of potential referees
- The candidate may add further names not to exceed one quarter of the total names on the list (e.g. If the FPC wishes to compile a list of eight potential referees, the candidate is permitted to choose two of them.)
- A minimum of three referees shall be solicited



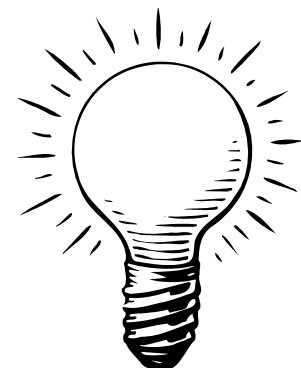
Assembling the File



Best practices for compiling potential referees in Professional Contribution and Standing:

Soliciting three external referees is generally not ideal, particularly if the three referees are not in agreement. FPCs are recommended to solicit five-six referees.

It is recommended that referees be solicited from a variety of institutions (i.e. Canadian, North American, international). FPCs should consult Unit tenure and promotion standards for specific requirements.





Assembling the File



Professional Contribution and Standing (F.3.1.3)

- Potential referees shall be external to York and at “arm’s length” from the candidate – this means that the referees have had no significant prior professional involvement or significant personal relationship with the candidate
- Exceptions to the “arm’s length” rule shall be made only if, in the opinion of the FPC, the only referees available to assess work done in a particular field are persons with whom the candidate has had a prior professional involvement. The reasons for choosing such referees should be explained in the file.

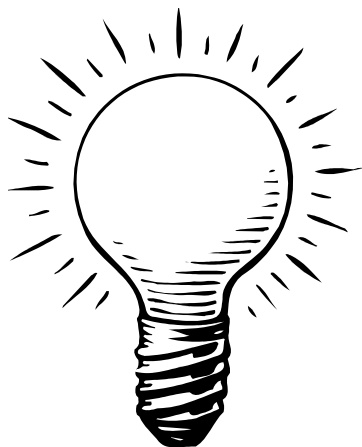


Assembling the File



Best practices for arm's length referees:

Many units ask external referees to comment on the relationship, if any, to the candidate.



Exceptions to the arm's length rule should seldom be used (i.e. discipline is extremely small, a potential referee is a top scholar). It is important for the FPC to address why it was necessary to solicit a referee who is not at arm's length from the candidate.

Arm's length referees excludes former supervisors, co-authors, co-editors, co-investigators on grants, relatives, etc. but does not exclude a scholar met at a conference.



Assembling the File

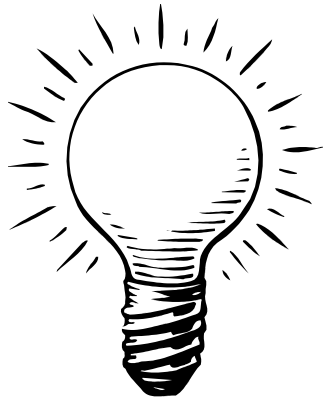


Professional Contribution and Standing (F.3.1.3)

- The FPC shall also solicit comment from co-authors/co-investigators on the nature of the candidate's contribution to joint work (they do not assess the work)
- The FPC shall also include brief profiles of the external referees who wrote letters for the file, if any



Assembling the File



Brief profiles should contain information regarding the referee's professorial status, institution, notable publications, specialization/discipline, and describe their suitability to write for the file.

Brief profiles should appear in the beginning of the PC&S section or in the FPC commentary, but not both.

Separate the letters written by external referees from those statements written by co-authors/collaborators.



Assembling the File



Service (F.3.1.4)

- The FPC compiles a list of potential referees
- The candidate may add further names not to exceed one quarter of the total names on the list (e.g. If the FPC wishes to compile a list of eight potential referees, the candidate is permitted to choose two of them.)
- A minimum of three referees shall be solicited



Assembling the File



What information gets sent to the referees for each area?

Teaching (*collegial referees only, not students)

- Copies of course handouts, assignments, and syllabi
- Candidate's optional personal statement (teaching philosophy)
- A copy of the Unit standards for tenure and promotion

Service

- Curriculum vitae
- Candidate's personal statement
- A copy of the Unit standards for tenure and promotion



Assembling the File



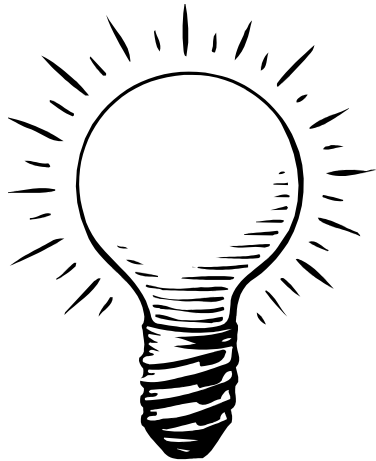
What information gets sent to the referees for each area?

Professional Contribution and Standing

- Curriculum vitae
- Candidate's personal statement
- A copy of the University *Tenure and Promotions Policy, Criteria and Procedures* and/or Unit standards for tenure and promotion
- Copies of the candidate's scholarly work (e.g. articles, book chapters, excerpts from books, work in progress)



Assembling the File



The FPC and the candidate should discuss the package of information that will be sent out to referees in each area.

Candidates may add material to the information packages as they deem relevant.



Assembling the File



How do you solicit referees for each section of the file?

Use the 'Sample Letters to Referees' in the Senate T&P Toolkit as the basis for solicitation:

<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/tnp/toolkit/index.htm>



Assembling the File



What documents do **NOT** go into a file?

- Unsigned reference letters
- Unsigned (anonymous) student comments
- Copies of course syllabi and assignments
- Copies of the candidate's scholarly work



Assembling the File



Unsolicited information may be used. The FPC has to conclude that it:

- (a) It reflects the candidate's academic career, and/or
- (b) presents that career in a fair and accurate light

If unsolicited material is added to a file, any necessary contextualizing commentary should be provided by the FPC.

If the FPC accepts the unsolicited material, the candidate shall see the material in its entirety (including signatures) and may respond to that material. The candidate should be notified in a timely manner that unsolicited material has been received. The Adjudicating Committee may decide to give this material less weight than other material that was specifically solicited for the file.



Organizing the File



All of the required documentation has been compiled. How do you organize the file?

Use the “Table of Contents” from the LA&PS T&P Toolkit to easily organize information into sections:

http://www.yorku.ca/laps/council/faculty/tandp_tools.html

The “Table of Contents” should be the first document in the file.

The “Annotated Table of Contents” will help you determine which documents should be placed in each section of the file.



Organizing the File



Page Numbering

Numbering the pages of the file improves readability and allows for references to be made by the various committees. The “Table of Contents” allows for easy numbering of each section:

(i.e.)

Section E contains pages E1, E2, E3,...E15

Section F contains pages F1, F2, F3,...F60



Organizing the File



Additional tips for organizing the file:

- The file should include those standards that are sent to external referees and used by the Adjudicating Committee
- The Advancement to Candidacy letter is a required document (F.3.1.5) and normally contains two parts: a letter from the Dean and a letter from the Adjudicating Committee. Both should be included in the file.
- The LA&PS Toolkit includes a number of templates to help faculty members and administrators organize the file and label it accordingly



FPC Commentary



When the file has been fully assembled, the FPC is required to prepare a commentary that contextualizes the evidence in the file. This commentary should identify:

- How student, collegial, and external referees were selected
- The rationale for soliciting referees (internal and external)
- Whether potential referees were chosen by the FPC or the candidate
- Significant delays in assembling the file
- The date in which the candidate received a copy of his/her file
- The FPC does not adjudicate the file! (F.3.1.1b)



The Candidate's Copy



When the file has been fully assembled, a copy will be provided to the candidate. This copy is redacted: all contextual identifiers (letterhead, addresses, signatures, etc.) are masked in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the referees.

Units are encouraged to provide candidates with a physical copy of the file to keep.

The candidate also receives a copy of the FPC commentary, and should be given the opportunity to respond before the file is considered by the Adjudicating Committee.



Resources



Online:

LA&PS Tenure and Promotions Toolkit:

http://www.yorku.ca/laps/council/faculty/tandp_tools.html

Senate Tenure and Promotions Toolkit:

<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/tnp/toolkit/index.htm>



Resources



Departments:

- Faculty Council Office
- Associate Dean, Faculty
- Office of the University Secretariat
- Academic Employee Relations
- York University Faculty Association (YUFA)