

1.2 Department Chair Responsibilities

1. General

As the academic leader and administrative head of the department, the chair is responsible for the recruitment, selection, and evaluation of faculty and other academic personnel in the department. In consultation with colleagues, the chair recommends appointments, promotions, merit advances, and terminations. The department chair is expected to make sure that faculty members are aware of the criteria prescribed for appointment and advancement, and to make recommendations concerning academic personnel in accordance with the procedures and principles stated policy.

2. Mentor/Co-Author/Collaborator Considerations

If the department chair is an academic appointee's (or prospective appointee's) mentor, co-author, or collaborator, they should not participate in the preparation of the appointment or academic review file, including preparing the solicitation letters to external referees (if applicable). The vice chair or another independent senior faculty member should oversee the process and prepare the departmental recommendation letter. The department chair may participate in the faculty discussion and vote on the appointment.

3. Financial Interest

If the department chair or any faculty member contributing to the file has a financial interest in a company employing a potential faculty member, that information should be included in the file, and such individuals should recuse themselves from contributing to the appointment file.

4. Near Relatives

No academic appointee may participate in any academic review affecting a near relative. (For definition of "near relative," refer to [APM 520](#).) If an existing academic appointee would normally participate in the recruitment process and/or vote on the advancement (that is, if the academic appointee were not a near relative), **the departmental recommendation letter should state that the existing appointee did not participate in the recruitment or vote on the advancement of the near relative.**

5. Interdisciplinary Programs or Units

If an appointee has significant research, teaching, and/or service obligations in an interdisciplinary program or organized research unit (ORU), the chair of their department should ask the program coordinator or ORU director to evaluate the academic appointee's contributions in these areas. If the academic appointee is eligible for promotion and their primary research and creative activity falls within the interdisciplinary area, the department chair should also ask the program coordinator to suggest appropriate external referees. However, the department chair will make the final selection of referees.

6. External Referee Letters – Appointments & Reviews

Related Manual Sections: [2.4.10](#) [3.4.14](#) [3.4.15](#) [3.4.16](#)

Letters of evaluation from referees external to UC San Diego are required for most academic appointment files (except for visiting appointees) and for certain academic review actions. It is important to solicit external referee evaluations well in advance of preparing the appointment file so that delays in file submission can be avoided. The required number of referee letters varies depending on the proposed appointment or review action but generally follows the breakdown detailed below:

EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT REFEREE LETTER REQUIREMENTS	
Academic Appointments	
Assistant Rank Appointees Assistant Teaching Professor (LPSOE)	Step I-III: 3 External Referee Letters Step IV and Above: 3 External Independent Referee letters
Associate or Full Rank Appointees Associate Teaching Professor (LSOE) Teaching Professor (Sr. LSOE)	5 External Independent Referee Letters
Academic Administrators Academic Coordinators	3 External Independent Referee Letters
Academic Reviews	
Promotion to Associate Professor Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor	5 External Independent Referee Letters
Promotion to Full Professor Promotion to Sr. Teaching Professor	3 External Independent Referee Letters
Advancement to Above Scale	3 External Independent Referee Letters
Career Equity Review (CER)	
Career Equity Reviews (CER) involving advancement to/through a barrier step require the inclusion of referee letters in alignment with this chart.	

a. Selection of External Referees

Careful selection of external referees is very important. The department chair should solicit evaluations from individuals who are independent of the candidate or academic appointee, who are experts in the candidate's field, and who are able to provide an objective appraisal of the academic's work. When possible, letters should be included from those who know candidates only through their work. Department Chairs are encouraged to review [CAP's Guide to Selecting External Referees](#).

When external letters are included in a file, either when required or when included at the department's discretion, the referee letters should be from senior scholars who are at the same rank or higher than that proposed for the appointee, and who are independent of the candidate. If external referees are not senior scholars or are not

independent of the candidate, the department must explain why they were selected as the best-qualified referees and obtain additional independent referees. **This information should only appear on the [Referee I.D. list](#).**

Use of external referees whom reviewers may not regard as objective or independent evaluators, either because they are too close to the candidate professionally (e.g., collaborators, thesis supervisors, etc.) or because they have a personal relationship with them, may be included if they shed light on collaborations. **However, non-independent letters do not count toward the minimum number of required external letters. Evaluation letters from colleagues in a candidate's department will not count towards the required number of external referee letters.**

External evaluation letters may be solicited from academic appointees at other University of California campuses. Under special circumstances, evaluations by other department members may be appropriate but in general, letters of evaluation from within a candidate's department are not recommended.

For Assistant-level appointments proposed at Step I, II, or III, letters of evaluation from the candidate's mentors and others at the home institution (including if at) are acceptable; however, additional letters from more independent sources should be obtained if available.

The department chair must give the candidate or academic appointee the opportunity to suggest names of persons to be solicited for letters of evaluation. Candidates may also provide in writing to the chair names of persons who, in the view of the candidate, for reasons set forth, might not objectively evaluate the candidate's qualifications or performance. Any such statement provided by the candidate shall be included in the review file.

Other names should be added to this list by the department chair in consultation with a departmental review committee (or departmental faculty with expertise in the candidate's field if there is not a departmental review committee convened). Actions requiring three external letters should include a minimum of two letters from department-selected external referees with the remaining letter coming from referees selected solely by the candidate – in other words, the majority of the letters should be from those selected by the department in all cases. Actions requiring five external letters should include a minimum three letters from department-selected external referees with the remaining two letters potentially being referees selected solely by the candidate. Additional letters from referees selected by a candidate or the department are acceptable as long as the applicable department selected minimum is met. Outside of the APOL-Recruit system, candidates should not solicit their own evaluation letters.

Referees should be asked to provide an objective and analytical evaluation with specific comments about the candidate's abilities and accomplishments, rather than uncritical

praise. It is expected that units will use the solicitation templates provided for [appointments](#) and [reviews](#) on the Academic Personnel web site.

Solicitation letters must include appropriate wording describing the proposed action and explaining to external referees the nature of the position to be filled, e.g., tenured or non-tenured, and the criteria required for appointment to that position. In all cases, the solicitation letter should explain the significance of the proposed rank and step so that referees can evaluate the candidate's achievements in relation to UC San Diego's criteria for appointment or advancement. Solicitation letters must include the University's confidentiality statement. A description of steps should be used as outlined in the [Academic Salary Scales](#) located on the Academic Personnel web site.

All external referee letters formally solicited and received by the department must be included in the file, whether or not the final departmental recommendation requires external letters. For example, if the department solicits letters for a promotion and, after reviewing those letters, determines that an action other than a promotion (e.g., merit advancement) is appropriate, the external letters received and reviewed by the departmental faculty must be included in the file so that campus reviewers consider identical file documents. If the departmental practice is to conduct an availability check or pre-solicitation, the response is not needed in the file. Only formally solicited letter responses should be included.

Departments may choose to share a candidate's curriculum vitae, redacted biobib, publications and/or links to publications, as well as the candidate's personal statement with external referees. Departments are encouraged to impress upon candidates the importance of maintaining a neutral tone in their personal statement, and refraining from arguing for a specific outcome. Some departments may routinely share other documents with external referees (redacted biobib, teaching evaluations etc.). Departments are encouraged to document its internal processes so faculty are aware of what is sent to reviewers. The same documents and/or links to publications should be sent with the solicitation letter to each external referee.

b. Electronic Solicitation of External Referees

External letters may be solicited and received electronically, **but they must be submitted with an email cover letter or electronic signature from the referee to verify authenticity.** A copy of the department's letter to the external referees, reflecting the date the letter was sent, must be included in the appointment file. If the same letter is sent to several individuals, only one copy should be included in the file. If the text of the letter varies among referees, one copy of each version should be included in the file, indicating the date the letter was sent and the names of the recipients.

c. Use of Applicant Letters from AP On-Line Recruit

For appointments at Assistant step I, II, and III, the department may include the referee letters solicited via the AP On-Line Recruit system.

d. Handwritten External Referee Letters

The department should provide typed versions of any handwritten letters received; both the handwritten and typed versions of the letter must be included in the file.

e. External Referee Letters in a Foreign Language

Translations of letters written in foreign languages must be included in the file, along with the original untranslated versions. At the end of the translation, the translator must be identified by name and position held. Candidates may not serve as translators for letters solicited for their appointment files.

f. Unsolicited Letters of Evaluation

Unsolicited letters of evaluation that are added to the file by the candidate or academic appointee are not considered confidential and should be labeled “provided by candidate.”

Unsolicited letters received by the department may be included in the file at the department chair’s discretion. Before including an unsolicited letter in an appointment file, the department chair must send the University’s confidentiality statement to the letter writer and obtain a signed or electronic authorization to use the unsolicited letter in the file. The authorization, the unsolicited letter, and the department chair’s letter transmitting the confidentiality statement should be included in the file.

g. Additional External Evaluation Information

- i. See Process Manual [Section 1.2.7.a](#) for external evaluations related to Teaching Professor Series
- ii. See Process Manual [Section 1.2.7.b](#) for external evaluations related to the Project Scientist and Specialist Series

7. Teaching and Mentoring Evaluations

Departments are encouraged to request feedback from mentees and graduate students as a regular form of collecting evidence of teaching effectiveness instead of tying periods of letter collection to a faculty member’s advancement cycle. When requesting mentee and graduate student input, solicitation

letters should not reference the specific academic review action under consideration to prevent inadvertently involving students in the promotion / advancement process.

Much like the background information included with responses from extramural evaluators, files that include solicited student letters should also include a summary of how the letters were collected/solicited. Specifically, the file should include a description of the criteria used to select letter writers, and a notation identifying those solicited at the department's request and /or those requested by the candidate.

a. Teaching Professor Series

For advancement in the Teaching Professor (LPSOE/LSOE/Sr. LSOE) series, external evaluation letters must be solicited from individuals who are professionally independent from the academic appointee; however, additional evaluation letters may be solicited from referees from within UC San Diego as a tool to assist the effective evaluation of an academic appointee's contributions to pedagogy on campus.

b. Project Scientist and Specialist Series

For advancement in the Project Scientist and Specialist series, evaluation letters may be solicited from individuals who are not professionally independent of the academic appointee; however, additional letters from more independent sources should be obtained if possible.

In cases in which the department chooses not to solicit letters from external referees, campus reviewers may later recommend that the department do so.

8. Academic Appointment Responsibilities

a. Funding

The department chair must ensure that funding is, or will be available, for the prospective appointee prior to forwarding the appointment file for consideration. For an appointment requiring an FTE, the department chair must also ensure that an FTE has been secured. The department chair should consult with the school dean's office if they are unsure about the availability of funding.

b. Department Letter

The department chair is responsible for discussing in the departmental recommendation letter an overview of the recruitment conducted by the department for the position, the voting process used, and the degree of consultation within the department.

9. Academic Review Responsibilities

The department chair or equivalent officer should ensure that an academic review file is prepared and forwarded for review and approval for each appointee who is due for advancement consideration, and for each appointee with a specified ending date if reappointment with or without advancement is recommended by the department.

About Non-Reappointment

For many academic series, reappointment is not automatic. The department chair should ensure that for cases of non-reappointment, that policy and any notice requirements are followed.

At the time of review, academic personnel staff in the department and respective deans' offices will work together to provide the department chair with a list of academics in the department eligible for reappointment and review. As per [APM 220-80](#), it is incumbent upon the department chair to make certain that there is an annual informal assessment of the status and performance of each academic appointee in the department, section, unit, program or school, including those who are not eligible for advancement. This annual assessment may include an interview with the academic appointee. The [Department Chair's Toolkit](#) is available to assist department chairs with their responsibilities.