

1.2 Department Chair Responsibilities

1. Department Chair's Role

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 consultation with colleagues, the chair recommends appointments, promotions, merit advances, and terminations. The department chair is responsible for ensuring that faculty members are aware of the criteria prescribed for appointment and advancement, and for making academic personnel recommendations in accordance with University of California, UC San Diego, School and Department procedures and principles. See [APM 245](#). Appendix A for Duties of Department Chairs (or Equivalent Officers)

The department chair or equivalent officer should ensure that an academic action, or file, is prepared and forwarded for review by the applicable authority for each of the following:

- Candidates under consideration for appointment (Academic Appointments).
- Appointees under consideration for advancement (Academic Reviews) either with or without an expected appointment end date.

In adherence to [APM 220-80](#), the department chair is responsible for making certain that there is an annual review of the status and performance of each faculty member in the department 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.

About Non-Reappointment

For many academic series, reappointment is not automatic. Department Chairs should ensure non-reappointments, adhere to policy and application notification requirements.

2. Department Chair Conflict of Interest (COI)

If a department chair's participation in preparing an appointment or review file presents a conflict of interest the department chair should recuse themselves and the vice chair (or other senior faculty member such as a former department chair) should prepare the review file and draft the departmental recommendation letter.

Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to the following:

- Near relatives (see [APM 520](#) for definition)
- Financial interests
- Active or close collaborations (collaboration within the last five (5) years)
- Current or past mentorship relationships

For additional information related to conflict of interest, please see [Section 1.6](#) of this manual.

3. 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 those programs or research units. 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.

4. External Referee Letters – Appointments & Reviews

Related Manual Sections:	2.4.10	3.4.15	3.4.16	3.4.17
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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 a review file, especially an appointment file, so that delays in file submission can be avoided. The required number of referee letters varies depending on the review action as detailed below:

EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT REFEREE LETTER REQUIREMENTS	
Academic Appointments	
Assistant Rank Appointees Assistant Teaching Professor	Step I-III: 3 External Non-Independent Referee Letters
	Step IV and Above: 3 External Independent Referee Letters
Associate or Full Rank Appointees Associate Teaching Professor Teaching Professor	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.
Advancement to Step VI
External referee letters are not required for advancement to Step VI.
If a department opts to solicit letters, they should only be used when needed to justify an extraordinary case, such as a multiyear acceleration.

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, these are considered *non-independent letters* and do not count toward the minimum number of required external letters. Evaluation letters from colleagues in a candidate's department also will not count towards the required number of external referee letters. 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. See [APM 220](#)

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 must include a minimum of two letters from department-selected external referees with the remaining letter coming from the list of referees suggested by the candidate. Actions requiring five external letters should include a minimum three letters from department-selected external referees with the remaining two letters being from the list of referees suggested by the candidate. Additional letters from referees suggested by a candidate or selected by the department are acceptable as long as applicable campus minimum requirements are met. Current appointees and potential candidates may not solicit their own evaluation letters. The majority of the letters should be from those selected by the department in all cases.

It is expected that units will use the solicitation templates provided for [appointments](#) and [reviews](#) 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.

About External Referee Declinations

When an external referee responds with a declination, the referee's declination, whether in memo, letter or email format, should be labeled with the corresponding Referee ID number and included in the file.

A best practice is for departments 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 (teaching evaluations, teaching statements, COVID statements, 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 reference 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 1.2.5.a](#) for external evaluations related to Teaching Professor Series.

- ii. See Process Manual [Section 1.2.5.b](#) for external evaluations related to the Project Scientist and Specialist Series.

5. 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 external 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.

6. 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.