Changes in the External Evaluator Letter Requirements for full Professor Promotions only (excluding LAW, where promotion to Professor is the tenure decision) effective March 29, 2013

- **Core Letters**: For promotion to full Professor cases, we only require 6 “Core Letters” from external evaluators, instead of the 10-12 letters currently required. These letters will be given the most weight in the review process. The six letters will be placed in a section of the promotion dossier called “Core Letters,” and must have the following characteristics:
  
  - Arm’s Length: All 6 must be from those with no personal or formal professional relationship to the candidate, *although simply “knowing” the candidate is not a problem because we expect our senior faculty to be well-known in the discipline*. Examples of reasons why an evaluator would likely be considered NOT arm’s length are provided in the next section.

  - Complete: The 6 Core Letters must answer the “preponderance” of the questions posed in our standard external evaluator template letter. We have reformatted the template to make it easier for evaluators to see what they need to address, and easier for us to see whether a response is complete. Although every Core Letter does not have to answer every question, it is important that each one answers most of them. If there are obvious gaps in the information provided by the collection of 6 letters, specific follow-up will be needed with the letter writers, or additional writers will need to be contacted. Specific follow up could be by e-mail, and simply appended to the letter. It does need to be in the form of a written response from the evaluator, not notes from a phone call, for example. Please encourage evaluators to provide complete letters, knowing that the case will need 6 substantive Core Letters to move forward. A letter that consists of a summary of accomplishments and general praise without critical comparative analysis is not sufficient for inclusion among the 6 Core Letters. The revised external evaluator template is attached and is also available in our on-line Template library: [http://www.bu.edu/provost/resources/fas/templates/](http://www.bu.edu/provost/resources/fas/templates/)

- **Additional Letters**: Letters solicited from those NOT arm’s length can be valuable (but are not required), and should be included in a separate section of the dossier (“Additional Letters”), following the section with the 6 Core Letters. This is also the place to include any letters that were solicited as Core Letters, but that are deemed not appropriate for Core Letters, once the letter is received. For example, you might have discovered that the evaluator has a close relationship with the candidate, or the letter is too general to be a Core Letter, and follow-up was not productive. Please note that all letters received must be included in the dossier in one of the two letter sections; we cannot discard any letters.

Among the reasons that a potential evaluator is usually considered NOT arm’s length are the following:

- co-author (unless incidental in a very long list)
• formal collaborator, co-instructor
• co-investigator on a grant or contract
• mentor or advisor
• co-worker, apart from short-term visiting appointments
• former student or former supervisor
• familial relationships or close personal ties beyond professional collegiality
• evaluator suggested by the candidate

This is not an exhaustive list of all who are not arm’s length, and there may be some with the relationships on this list who could be considered arm’s length for a particular candidate. If you have questions, please consult with Associate Provost Julie Sandell as early as possible to avoid unnecessarily soliciting additional letters after the review process has begun. It is important that all levels of review have access to the same set of letters, and we do not want to have to turn back cases centrally for insufficient Core Letters, because this will greatly delay the review.

• **Context page for each Core Letter:** All levels of review need to have the same basic information about the reasons why each evaluator’s input should be valued for the Core Letters. This is not meant to be lengthy or burdensome. The reason for each evaluator may be obvious to those at the department level, but the information becomes essential as the case moves up the path of review. Note that this detailed information is only needed for the 6 Core Letters.

  On a single page, before each Core Letter, please describe:
  o Who suggested that the person serve as an evaluator (e.g., suggested by the Chair, subcommittee in the Department, the Dean, etc.)?
  o Why was the person chosen - what is the individual’s standing in the discipline? Please make the case for why reviewers should value this person’s evaluation.
  o What is the standing of the person’s department and/or institution in the discipline, compared to our own department? Perhaps both the department and institution are outstanding, more highly ranked or prestigious than our own, or perhaps the institution is equivalent to BU, but the evaluator’s department is among the best in the world. Please provide the information needed to understand the context of the external evaluator’s perspective, especially with regard to whether our candidate would be promoted at the evaluator’s institution.

• **Table of all those contacted for Evaluations:** We still need brief information about each person contacted for a letter, as in our current Promotion Application, so that we can see who was contacted, and who did or did not provide a letter. This information will continue to be collected in a table in Part V (Dean’s Report). It is currently item V-6 “External Evaluations,” immediately following item V-5, “Justification of the Position and Needs of the University.”

The External Evaluator solicitation template for promotion to full Professor is on the following page. As always, you may re-format and personalize, but please be sure to include all of the standard questions and the confidentiality statement. The confidentiality text is highlighted for your convenience. Some schools choose to use this statement as a footnote, but it needs to be included as written, somewhere in the letter. A copy of the solicitation letter you use must be included in each promotion dossier.
External Evaluator Solicitation Letter Template for Promotion to Full Professor (March, 2013)

[date]

Professor YY
[address]

Dear Professor YY:

Thank you for agreeing to evaluate Professor XX’s qualifications for promotion to the rank of full Professor. I know that formulating a well considered response to such a request is no small task. I want to assure you that your response will be carefully reviewed and treated as an important factor in reaching a decision that is in the best interests of Professor XX and Boston University. Your letter will be treated as confidential to the fullest extent allowed by law and will be made available only to University personnel participating in the review process. Our policy is to treat the input from external reviewers in faculty evaluations with the highest degree of confidentiality. This includes taking the necessary legal steps, when appropriate, to resist attempts to breach the confidentiality of such records and, if disclosure is compelled by a court, to limit its scope as much as is feasible. [This confidentiality statement must be included here, or as a footnote]

With this letter, we have enclosed a copy of Professor XX’s curriculum vitae, [optional- sample syllabi from courses taught] and copies of representative publications. [If appropriate: indicate the nature of Professor XX’s working conditions: e.g. teaching duties, administrative roles, other service, restrictions on academic activities/roles, and any contextual information for the department/school that merits mention.] Please contact me if you require further information.

We seek a specific evaluation, including a judgment of Professor XX’s accomplishments and impact as a researcher and scholar. We ask that you begin by describing any relationship you might have with Professor XX. After that, please help us by addressing the following questions and topics in your evaluation of Professor XX:

1. What is the scholarly and/or creative work that has earned him/her national/international recognition?

2. How does s/he compare to others at similar stages in their careers and to the best [researchers/scholars/artists] in the field when they were at a comparable stage? Specific comparisons are often helpful.

3. How would you rate her/his future promise?

4. We would appreciate your comments on the candidate’s service to the profession at the local, national or international level.

5. Do you have first-hand knowledge of the candidate’s effectiveness as a teacher or mentor? If so, we would appreciate your insights on those activities as well.

6. Finally, we would greatly appreciate your candid opinion as to whether Professor XX would be promoted to full Professor at your institution.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for undertaking this task. I will need to receive your letter by [date]. If you are unable to provide the evaluation, I would be obliged if you could let me know as soon as possible and recommend others who are appropriate for this task.

Thank you very much for your participation in this process.

Sincerely,