

Arm's Length Determination Checklist (Internal Use)

This checklist is intended for use by department chairs, promotion committees, and dean's offices when vetting proposed external reviewers.

A. Training & Mentorship

- Was the reviewer the candidate's dissertation advisor or co-advisor?
- Was the reviewer on the candidate's dissertation committee?
- Was the reviewer the candidate's postdoctoral mentor?
- Was the candidate the reviewer's doctoral or postdoctoral trainee?

If "yes" to any → Not arm's length.

B. Research Collaboration

- Any co-authored publications in the past 5 years?
- Extensive co-authorship at any time?
- Joint grants (current or recent)?
- Co-PI status on funded projects?
- Co-editorship of scholarly volumes or journal issues?
- Participation in the same tightly integrated research center or lab?

If "yes," assess recency, extent, and materiality. Recent or substantial collaboration → Typically not arm's length. Often, however, for example, co-editorship will not involve a close working relationship such as to preclude arm's length status.

C. Institutional Relationship

- Current colleague in same department?
- Recent colleague (within ~3–5 years)?
- Direct supervisory or reporting relationship (past or present)?

If "yes" to any → Generally not arm's length.

D. Personal or Financial Relationship

- Close personal friendship?
- Family or romantic relationship (past or present)?
- Shared financial interests (consulting, patents, companies)?

If “yes” to any → Not arm’s length.

E. Final Determination

- Reviewer confirmed independence in writing.
- Department affirms no conflict.
- Dean’s office reviewed and approved arm’s length status.

Standard Applied: Would a reasonable external observer conclude that this reviewer can provide an independent, unbiased assessment?