Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
External Reviewer Process

1. When are external reviewer (ER) requests solicited?

OFADEI begins soliciting ER names from departments in late spring, with a hard deadline of May 30 for submission of completed reviewer lists and ER materials. Once the list is submitted, OFADEI will review and send out requests within one week of receipt. If departments send lists earlier, ER requests will be sent out earlier.

2. When do external reviewers start their review?

ER invitation letters are sent within one week of receipt to the OFADEI. To avoid delays, it is preferred you send the candidate's ER materials along with the external reviewer list so that when and if we receive an affirmative response, the packets can be sent to the reviewer, which helps with a timely review and return to our office. The external reviewer is unable to start their review until the ER materials are sent to them.

3. How much time do external reviewers have to review?

External reviewers are given two full months to submit their letters. This is entirely dependent on when they agree to review the dossier and if the OFADEI has all the candidates' ER materials in the proper formatted. Delays in the proper formatting of candidates' dossiers will delay the process of when the packet is sent to reviewers.

4. When are external review letters due?

The first round of external reviewers that are solicited are asked to submit letters by early August, allowing sufficient time for unit-level committee reviews. However, this deadline may be extended as potential external reviewers deny to serve in this capacity and the OFADEI has to reach out to new external reviewers, therefore resetting the timeline.

5. What happens if a reviewer does not respond or declines to serve in this capacity?

OFADEI will make up to two follow-up attempts. If there is no response or a decline is received, the office will move to another name on the list.

6. Why do departments sometimes receive letters after unit-level reviews have already begun?

The process may be delayed when initial reviewers decline or fail to respond. Each time a new reviewer is solicited, the two-month review window resets, which can push responses later into the year, sometimes after unit-level reviews have started.

7. Should the candidate or department contact external reviewers?

No. At no point should the candidate or department reach out to the potential reviewers, OFADEI handles all communication. Any contact between the candidate/department and potential ERs is considered a breach of process.

8. How are conflicts of interest (COIs) handled?

OFADEI carefully evaluates any disclosed relationships between the candidate and proposed ERs. Reviewers with recent co-authorships, former advising relationships, or institutional proximity may be disqualified to ensure impartiality.

9. Will departments be notified when letters are received?

Yes. OFADEI notifies departments once the required number of letters is received and Section D is compiled and uploaded to the candidate's digital dossier. The minimum number of letters is four.

10. Can department heads review/access the letters?

Yes. After Section D is added to the candidate's dossier, department heads and unit review committees may access them as part of the official dossier review process.

11. Can reference letters from the hiring packet be used in an Immediate Tenure/Hybrid dossier?

Yes. If the reference letters used for the candidate's hiring process include language related to tenurability and the other content typically expected of external reviewer letters, they can be included in dossier. If the letters do not include the proper language, or you have questions about the current language in the letters, contact the ADFADEI. Guidance will be given by the Associate Dean to assist on the decision to use or the need to reach out to references to modify their letters. Please keep in mind that the dossier must have a minimum of four external reviewer letters with a max amount of six. Should an Immediate Tenure/Hybrid candidate not be able to use their reference letters, they will follow the external reviewer protocol consistent with the HHD Promotion & Tenure Guidelines.