

**FROM:** Justin Jacobs, Chair, Committee on Faculty Actions  
Monica Jackson, Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty  
**TO:** American University Colleagues  
**RE:** Instructions for Submitting Faculty Files for Action  
**DATE:** February 2025

### CFA Schedule for 2025-26

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Feb. 5, 2025, 12-1pm: Open CFA Meeting

Feb. 12, 2025: Deadline for submitting to the CFA all faculty files for promotion to full professor.

Sept. 10, 2025: 12-1 Open CFA Meeting

Oct. 15, 2025: Deadline for submitting files to the CFA for all pre-tenure reappointments and Professorial Lecturer files with disagreement at the unit level.

Jan. 14, 2026: Deadline for submitting to the CFA all faculty files for tenure (if applicable) and promotion to associate professor.

Feb. 4, 2026, 12-1pm: Open CFA Meeting

Feb. 11, 2026: Deadline for submitting to the CFA all faculty files for promotion to full professor.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Candidates for relevant categories of reappointment, promotion, or tenure (see 1.1), faculty coordinators, and all internal reviewers should carefully follow these instructions for submitting Files for Action to the Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA).

The CFA and Dean of Faculty (DOF) have prepared these instructions in accordance with the current [American University Faculty Manual](#). Candidates, faculty coordinators, and all internal reviewers should also carefully read the *Faculty Manual* (and University Library continuing appointment supplement where relevant) and the relevant faculty guidelines (tenure-track, tenured, term and continuing appointment, or Library continuing appointment) of the candidate's assigned teaching or academic unit, which are posted on the [Dean of Faculty's \(DOF\) website](#).

Please note: the **Washington College of Law (WCL)** uses a separate review process. WCL Files for Action do not pass through the CFA, and WCL faculty do not need to follow these guidelines.

### 1.1 General Information about the File for Action

Candidates for reappointment, promotion, or tenure submit a File for Action using the designated procedure of their teaching or academic unit. Internal reviewers evaluate the File for Action following criteria specified in the *Faculty Manual*<sup>1</sup>, unit guidelines, and (where relevant) this memo.

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<sup>1</sup> Library continuing appointment faculty should consult the relevant supplement when the *Faculty Manual* is referred to in this document.

Once the file has moved through the appropriate levels of review within the unit, the dean or University Librarian<sup>2</sup> will then review the file, make a recommendation, and send it forward to either the DOF or the CFA based on the type of faculty action.

### **1.2 Term Faculty Reappointment, Continuing Appointment, Promotion on the Professorial Lecturer Sequence, and Library Continuing Appointment Actions**

- Files involving these faculty actions do **not** need to follow this memo's specifications. Faculty applying for these actions should contact their deans' offices for checklists and instructions on preparing their applications.
- *Process:* These files go directly from the academic unit to the DOF for review. The CFA does not review these files unless there is a disagreement at the unit level, as per the *Faculty Manual*. (Also see section 6.3 of this memo.)

### **1.3 Tenure-track Reappointment, Tenure, Tenure-track/Tenured Promotion, and Term or Continuing Appointment Promotions to Associate Professor or Professor**

- Files involving these faculty actions must follow this memo's specifications, and the deadlines listed in the schedule above are final.
- *Process:* These files are forwarded to the Faculty Senate office for university-level review by the CFA and then DOF. They then go to the Provost for final review. In the case of a positive decision from the Provost, a recommendation for tenure and/or promotion goes forward to the Board of Trustees, which has the final decision-making authority. A decision by the Provost to deny promotion or tenure terminates the process. A faculty member can grieve the decision using the procedure specified in the *Faculty Manual*.

### **1.4 General Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting File Materials**

A File for Action documents the faculty member's activities and accomplishments in three categories—scholarship, teaching (or primary responsibilities for librarians), and service—as generally defined in the *Manual* and more specifically defined in the candidate's unit guidelines. (The *Manual* states that “scholarship or scholarly refers to research, scholarship, and creative or professional activity.” Glossary, p. 9.)

Materials in the File for Action are to be concise, meaningful, and clearly related to the candidate's performance or accomplishments. The Files for Action should *not* overwhelm reviewers with extraneous material, such as multiple syllabi that all convey the same pedagogy. Please use 12 font size for text.

All Files for Action should be submitted in digital PDF format to the unit faculty coordinator who is responsible for uploading to the unit SharePoint. Wherever possible, a document saved as a searchable PDF is always preferable to a scanned paper document saved as a PDF image. Materials that are too large to be submitted as a PDF (e.g. multi-media graphics, video, gaming, etc.) may use cloud-based links. Please use illustrations, graphs, or other aids sparingly, and only if they significantly enhance the reader's understanding of the file.

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<sup>2</sup> All references to “dean” in this memo refer to the deans/heads of all academic units, including the University Librarian and the unit leads for the Office of Graduate and Immersive Studies and Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, as found in the *Faculty Manual's* Glossary.

Hard copies are no longer required at the CFA level and above (see “Scholarly Appendix” below). Units that wish to continue requiring hard copies of Files for Action for reviews at the unit level must replicate the digital copy exactly.

### **1.5 Additions to a File**

Only the candidate and/or those who submit written material as part of the established process detailed below (e.g. unit coordinators who add internal memos from previous evaluations) may include material in the candidate’s File for Action. Internal reviewers may add only their own memo to the file. No one may remove or replace any part of a file, except to make minor, non-substantive grammatical or typographical corrections.

Candidates are encouraged to add new information on significant accomplishments to their File for Action that occur during their review process. A candidate wishing to update a narrative or curriculum vitae, once submitted, should submit a new dated version of it with “\_revision1” added to the end of the file name. For subsequent revisions, the candidate should use the same procedure and label the element “revision2,” “revision3,” etc.

All internal reviewers who have contributed to the candidate’s file up to that point need to be notified of additions by the candidate or the unit coordinator, with information redacted if necessary.

*\*Note:* All levels of internal review may ask the candidate about the status of scholarship in progress. Section 11(g) of the *Faculty Manual* states, “The provost, in consultation with the dean of faculty, will review the file and may request clarifying or additional information from relevant persons or committees involved in the review at earlier stages. In extraordinary circumstances, the provost may request additional external review letters that will be reviewed at the previous levels. Such requests and any responses (or summaries thereof) must be included in the file.” In extraordinary circumstances, and with knowledge that doing so may delay the process, deans, the CFA chair, or the DOF may request additional information from the candidate, earlier internal reviewers, and/or external reviewers. When seeking revised or new external letters, the request must be submitted via the chair or dean (see footnote 2). If the deans, CFA, or DOF request such information, earlier reviewers must also be given an opportunity to review and comment upon the file in light of the additions and, if necessary, revise their earlier judgments, and, if relevant, take a new vote.

### **1.6 Ensuring that the File is in Order**

Please follow these guidelines closely. All File for Action must have the prescribed elements in the order specified below. Please use the exact file names and SharePoint document types specified below for the components of the file.

Each academic unit provides a “Checklist” of the material required in a File for Action. The DOF prepares these “Checklists” annually indicating what should be included in a File for Action for the various levels of review. The checklists can be accessed through the AU portal and found on the DOF website. Here are the links for tenure-track/tenured checklists, [Library continuing appointment faculty checklists](#), and [term and continuing appointment checklists](#).

The file must be complete and in order for the CFA to properly review each file. Any file that is incomplete or out of order will be returned to the unit.

Section 2 below discusses the file components that the candidates are responsible for preparing, including a comprehensive narrative as well as the scholarship, teaching, and service components.

Section 3 discusses the components of a File for Action for each candidate, including instructions for securing internal and external reviews of the candidate's materials and adding those reviews to the candidate's file.

Section 4 describes the procedures for internal reviews. Section 5 describes procedures for external reviews.

- Files for tenure-track reappointment undergo internal review only.
- Files for tenure and files for term, continuing appointment, or tenure-track/tenured promotion to associate or full professor undergo both internal and external levels of review.

Section 6 provides additional notes on CFA reviews of faculty actions for

- Senior promotions and hires
- Term or continuing appointment faculty actions involving disagreements at the unit level.

## 2. FILE COMPONENTS – Candidate's Responsibilities

The candidate is responsible for assembling the following six basic components that comprise their File for Action for the internal review. The candidate submits an electronic copy of their File for Action to the academic unit's Faculty Coordinator or Library Coordinator by the unit's assigned due date. The candidate will prepare the file as a set of PDF files using the standardized file names listed below. Please adhere to the file names.

### 2.1 Comprehensive Narrative

Filename: candidatelastname\_narrative.pdf

SharePoint document type: "Narrative"

The first component is a "Comprehensive Narrative" of no more than 3,000 words (including footnotes, appendices, and any other matter). This comprehensive narrative succinctly captures the candidate's record of activities and accomplishments in the areas of scholarship, teaching, and service. Candidates must use double-spacing, 12-point type, and 1-inch margins. The comprehensive narrative should specifically refer to how the candidate has met their unit's criteria for promotion and/or tenure, as applicable. The comprehensive narrative will include the following three sections in this order:

- Scholarship narrative section: describes with detail and specificity major scholarly accomplishments, objectives, and goals, including a discussion of the candidate's future scholarly agenda, such as works-in-progress, future projects and venues and general trajectory toward the next promotion. If applicable, candidates should also discuss future funding prospects and any efforts they may have made to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in their scholarly records.<sup>3</sup> Librarians will describe achievements and future agenda, and DEI contributions where relevant, associated with scholarship

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<sup>3</sup> [American University's Plan for Inclusive Excellence](#) states in Goal 5 that the university offers an inclusive curriculum that "advances a holistic learning experience and demonstrates AU's values of critical inquiry, intellectual engagement, and respectful discourse across diverse perspectives."

- Teaching narrative section: describes teaching philosophy, addressing achievements (including engagement with students beyond the classroom), charting improvement, and establishing areas of growth; this section should also discuss efforts by the candidate to incorporate DEI. Continuing Appointment-line Library faculty, who do not teach courses, must address “primary responsibilities” as per unit guidelines, including DEI-related contributions.
- Service narrative section: describes engagement with the university community, profession, field, discipline, and/or public life related to scholarly expertise, including any efforts to address DEI in their service records.

*\*Note on narrative for internal reviews:* All candidates submitting a File for Action must include a Comprehensive Narrative. Because the Comprehensive Narrative will be read by AU colleagues both inside and outside of the candidate’s discipline, candidates are encouraged to write for a broad, interdisciplinary audience. Candidates want to explain the significance and impact of their activities and accomplishments to others who may not be familiar with their field. Candidates are encouraged to consult with senior faculty and other resources in preparing drafts of their Comprehensive Narrative.

## 2.2 Candidate’s CV

Filename: candidatelastname\_cv.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Curriculum Vitae”

The candidate prepares a discipline-appropriate curriculum vitae (CV). The CV should be dated. All publications including article and book chapter entries must provide full citations including authors, title, dates, and page range or number of pages. Professional and creative productions should be annotated with basic information on the scope, venue, and dates of the project. If a candidate has work in progress near completion, such as a manuscript, the candidate may list the work on the CV, noting that it is work in progress, and include the work in the “Scholarly Appendix.”

## 2.3 Information on Scholarship

Filename: candidatelastname\_scholarship.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Scholarship”

As a supplement to the comprehensive narrative, the “Information on Scholarship” section documents the impact of the candidate’s scholarly accomplishments. This section typically includes information on the significance of publication or distribution venue (such as acceptance rates, impact factor, and rank of journals; number of downloads, if available; status and scope of publishers, distributors, galleries, etc.); information on the nature of collaboration in co-authored works (e.g., the candidate’s role and contributions in the project); relevant peer reviews (such as readers’ reviews if work is still unpublished), documentation of acceptance by publishers or distributors; published reviews; and, if appropriate, evidence from relevant citation indices, using the unit’s criteria. Some candidates have opted to organize this information as charts or bullet points. Please include a summary Table of Contents, annotated where necessary. Candidate should not write an additional narrative; the scholarly section in the comprehensive narrative is sufficient.

*\*Note on placement of scholarly materials:* Please do not put the actual publications or other original scholarly, professional, and creative material in the “Scholarship” file; those materials belong in the “Scholarly Appendix.”

## 2.4 Teaching Portfolio OR Information on Primary Responsibilities

Filename: candidatelastname\_teaching.pdf OR candidatelastname\_primary.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Teaching Portfolio/Primary Responsibilities”

For Library faculty: please consult with the University Librarian’s office about the content of the [“Information on Primary Responsibilities”](#) section.

For teaching faculty: as a supplement to the comprehensive narrative, teaching faculty applying for any faculty action covered by this memo (see sections 1.2 and 1.3) will submit a separate Teaching Portfolio that provides additional information and documentation for the candidate’s teaching accomplishments as outlined in the “Beyond SETs Guidance” document on the [DOF website](#). Please include a one-page Table of Contents, annotated where necessary.

The Teaching Portfolio consists of five required components:

- a) the teaching narrative (inclusion in the comprehensive narrative described above meets this requirement);
- b) self-assessment of teaching;
- c) peer assessment of teaching;
- d) student assessment of teaching beyond numerical student evaluation of teaching (SET) scores; and
- e) numerical SET scores.

Please consult the [Teaching Portfolio Requirements page](#) on the [DOF website](#) and [CTRL](#) for further details. The Teaching Portfolio also may include information about specific efforts to address diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the candidate’s teaching practice.

*\*Notes regarding SET numerical scores:*

- SET summary scores, including medians and percentiles, are retrievable by faculty in their Blue accounts at set.american.edu. There are two instructor reports, Longitudinal and Instructor Semester Summaries, used to capture data required for files for action. A Department Longitudinal report is also available for comparison. The Department report includes all full-time faculty in their teaching department.
- For tenure-track reappointments and promotion to associate professor and/or tenure: Summary reports will summarize all SETs for all courses taught at AU, including courses taught as an adjunct, term, continuing appointment, or tenure-track faculty member.
- For promotion to full professor: candidates should access SET information for courses taught only in the previous six years.

## 2.5 Information on Service

Filename: candidatelastname\_service.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Service”

As a supplement to the comprehensive narrative, the “Information on Service” section documents the candidate’s service contributions. This section includes any relevant documents associated with service to AU and external service, including candidate efforts to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Please, begin with a one-page Table of Contents, annotated where necessary.

## 2.6 Scholarly Appendix

Filename: candidatelastname\_scholarlyappendix.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Scholarly Appendix”

A final Scholarly Appendix contains the candidate’s actual publications or other original scholarly/professional/creative material. “Scholarly” is a term encompassing traditional academic research, creative, and professional work. The academic units themselves provide guidance to candidates on the form in which scholarship/creative/professional work is digitized for the Scholarly Appendix, and whether it is submitted as a link to a resource or as digitized material itself. The CFA encourages candidates to use links and cloud-based services as much as possible for videos or other files too large for SharePoint. Books, either electronic or hard copy, are not necessarily submitted but may be requested by the DOF or Provost.

## 3. FILE COMPONENTS – Dean’s Office Responsibilities

After the candidate submits their File for Action to their dean, the internal review process begins. The Faculty Coordinator of the candidate’s academic unit will create a Faculty Package in SharePoint for the candidate’s File for Action. The name of the candidate in the SharePoint form should be preceded by the year of reappointment (i.e. 2020 Jane Smith). The dean’s office is responsible for creating and adding the ten components listed below to the candidate’s File for Action.

### 3.1 Checklist

Filename: candidatelastname\_checklist.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Checklist”

The File for Action checklists for the various ranks are available on the DOF website at the following links: [tenure track/tenured checklists](#), [Library continuing appointment faculty checklists](#), and [term and continuing appointment checklists](#). The dean’s office will double check that all required items on the checklist are included in the candidate’s file.

### 3.2 Additions

Filename: candidatelastname\_addition#.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Addition”

The “Additions” section includes any material added to the File for Action during the unit review process. Additions typically may include correspondence from the candidate regarding awards or recognitions, manuscript acceptance, new service appointments, etc. Label the file “\_addition 1,” “\_addition 2,” etc.

*\*Note:* Please do not place candidate response memos here; they should be included in “Internal Evaluations.”

### 3.3 Previous Internal Evaluations

Filename: candidatelastname\_previouslyeval.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Internal Letters”

The “Previous Internal Evaluations” section includes all previous evaluations of the candidate during their time at AU. This includes all internal unredacted memos, vote counts, and any candidate

responses from previous faculty actions including re-appointments, if applicable, along with any relevant paperwork such as communication waiving years of prior tenure service or delay of tenure. It must include any earlier evaluations, even from unsuccessful or withdrawn attempts at promotion. The materials should be arranged chronologically from oldest to newest.

*\*Please note:* Do not include annual reviews or merit reviews that remain internal to the academic or teaching unit in the file.

### 3.4 Internal Evaluations

Filename: candidatelastname\_internal.pdf

SharePoint document type: "Internal Letters"

The "Internal Evaluations" contain the current unredacted internal memos arranged chronologically in the order listed below. Should the candidate respond to any of the memos, the candidate's response immediately follows that memo.

- a) Report of the reading committee, or senior faculty committee (if applicable)
- b) Report of the Rank and Tenure/Personnel/Faculty Action Committee (with separate faculty vote)
- c) Chair's Memo (if applicable)
- d) Dean or University Librarian's Memo
- e) CFA Memo (added by Faculty Senate Operations Coordinator after CFA review)

The CFA and DOF strongly recommend that internal evaluations be limited to 2000 words, except in extenuating circumstances where extensive explanation is required.

### 3.5 External Letters

Filename: candidatelastname\_externalletters.pdf

SharePoint document type: "External Letters"

The "External Letters" section contains the unredacted (and, of course, confidential) versions of letters submitted by the external reviewers (i.e., outside of AU). The individual letters should be compiled into one file. Should a candidate choose to respond to evaluations from an external reviewer, the candidate's response comes at the end of the file, after the last letter.

Each external review letter is designated as "letter 1," "letter 2," etc. by writing a number on the upper right-hand corner of each page of each letter. Numbers must be consecutive. Any missing numbers must be for disqualified letters included in the disqualified letters file (section 3.8). Also see section 5.0 for criteria for selecting appropriate external reviewers.

*\*Note:* External letters are not applicable for pre-tenure reappointment files.

### 3.6 External Reviewers' CVs

Filename: candidatelastname\_externalcv.pdf

SharePoint document type: "External CVs"

The "External CVs" section contains a compilation of curricula vitae of the reviewers, labeled and listed in the same order as the letters themselves in the "External Letters" section.

### 3.7 External Correspondence

Filename: candidatelastname\_external\_correspondence.pdf



SharePoint document type: “External Correspondence”

The “External Correspondence” section contains all correspondence with the external reviewers. This includes all written and electronic correspondence soliciting and accepting evaluations as well as the list of documents sent to them. Materials should be arranged chronologically from oldest to newest for each external reviewer.

### 3.8 Disqualified Letters

Filename: candidatelastname\_disqualifiedletters.pdf

SharePoint document type: “External Letters”

If needed, any disqualified letters are included in the “Disqualified Letters” section, along with accompanying CV and correspondence.

### 3.9 Unit Guidelines

Filename: candidatelastname\_guidelines.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Guidelines”

Each unit’s current guidelines for tenure and promotion are posted at the following links on the DOF’s website:

- [Tenure-track and tenured](#) and [Library continuing appointment faculty guidelines](#)
- [Term and continuing appointment faculty guidelines](#).

According to the Memorandum to Deans Council from the DOF and CFA, dated April 8, 2021 (as amended by the deans):

Tenure-track and tenured faculty may choose between 2 sets of guidelines for evaluating their tenure/promotion files for action:

- Their academic unit’s current/newest guidelines posted on the DOF website at the time of the submission of their File for Action, OR
- Unit guidelines in place at the time of their second contract and pre-tenure review. (Note that faculty whose tenure clocks were extended due to COVID may have pre-tenure review in year 4 or 5 instead of year 3.)

All other faculty seeking promotion will be evaluated using the guidelines for their academic units that were posted on the DOF website at the time of the submission of their File for Action. All faculty listed below should include current guidelines:

- Term or continuing appointment faculty seeking promotion without tenure to associate professor or professor
- Tenured faculty seeking promotion to full professor.

### 3.10 Vote Counts

Filename: candidatelastname\_votes.pdf

SharePoint document type: “Votes”

The “Votes” section should include all vote counts from the current action, including numbers of Yes votes, No votes, Abstentions, and Recusals. If there are multiple committees voting on the candidate’s record, the votes should be reported on separate sheets, in chronological order from earliest to most recent.

Please note that the standardized voting contains 4 elements: scholarship, teaching, service, and an overall assessment. Candidates for tenure include an additional vote on tenure.

The voting choices are: Yes, No, Abstain, or Recuse.

For pre-tenure reappointment

- a) The candidate is making satisfactory progress on scholarship
- b) The candidate is making satisfactory progress on teaching
- c) The candidate is making satisfactory progress on service
- d) Overall, the candidate is making satisfactory progress toward tenure and/or promotion

For promotion to associate or full professor:

- a) The candidate has met the criteria for scholarship
- b) The candidate has met the criteria for teaching
- c) The candidate has met the criteria for service
- d) Overall, the candidate has met the criteria for reappointment and/or promotion

For tenure:

- a) The candidate has met the criteria for scholarship
- b) The candidate has met the criteria for teaching
- c) The candidate has met the criteria for service
- d) Overall, the candidate has met the criteria for promotion
- e) The candidate has met the criteria for tenure

#### 4. PROCEDURES FOR INTERNAL REVIEW

This section discusses the levels of internal review and general guidelines for preparing and submitting internal reviews.

##### 4.1 Required Levels of Review

Written evaluations are required from the three following levels of internal review before a File for Action can be submitted to the CFA:

**a) Unit-level designated review committee**

This can be the rank and tenure, faculty action, or personnel committee at the teaching/academic unit, or a group of senior faculty, as the unit defines. Please note that the evaluation memo must be signed by an individual heading or representing the committee for the purpose of correspondence. Unsigned memos from “Rank and Tenure Committee” or “Senior Faculty” are unacceptable. The unit-level committee memo is added to the “Internal Reviews” section of the file and their vote is recorded in the “Vote” file.

**b) Head of teaching/academic unit**

This can be the appointed head of the teaching unit, or equivalent, as appropriate to the academic unit. The letter should include a recommendation on reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure for the appropriate rank.

**c) Academic unit dean or the University Librarian**

The letter should include a recommendation on reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure for the appropriate rank.

#### **4.2 Recommended Length**

All reviews, internal and external, are analytic and specific. CFA strongly recommends brevity, suggesting a word limit of 2000 words in cases where extended explanations are not needed.

#### **4.3 Conflict of Interest**

Internal review memo should briefly describe in the opening paragraph any conflict of interest that goes beyond the customary cooperation expected among unit colleagues and why the conflict of interest does not prevent an objective assessment or warrant recusal. As section 11(a) of the *Faculty Manual* states: “Faculty members should always avoid conflicts of interest involving the evaluation of individual faculty members for appointment, reappointment, tenure, or promotion. The university expects the provost, deans, university librarian, members of the Committee on Faculty Actions, teaching unit chairs, and all other internal faculty reviewers to acknowledge such conflicts openly and to abstain from participation whenever such conflicts arise.”

#### **4.4 Discussion of the Candidate’s Record of Scholarship, Teaching, and Service**

Memos at the unit level are each independent evaluations of the candidate’s performance in scholarship, teaching or primary responsibilities, and service; the candidate’s response to previous evaluations; areas of needed improvement and growth; and promise of continuing activity in scholarship, teaching, and service. Reviewers will use the criteria in the unit guidelines for the rank to which the candidate has applied when evaluating the file.

The memos will address in detail the nature and quality of the candidate’s scholarship. They will address questions that may arise for non-specialists later reading the file, for instance the meaning of a co-authorship or the prestige level of a particular grant or patent. They will identify the rank and significance of venues in which the candidate’s work has appeared. Memos should follow unit guidelines and address the criteria in the unit guidelines. The memos should address the teaching record *beyond student evaluations* and provide context that may help those outside the unit to interpret data.

#### **4.5 Referencing Internal or External Reviews**

The internal review memos will address any issues flagged in earlier reviews. Quotations from other memos cannot substitute for the internal reviewer’s own analysis, though quotations may be included. Any references to external review letters must strictly preserve the anonymity of those reviewers, avoiding even descriptors (e.g., gender, rank, department, type of university, etc.), since they may in many cases significantly narrow the pool of possible reviewers.

#### **4.6 Recommendation**

Evaluation memos must include a recommendation for or against the faculty action. When a reviewing body is not unanimous, the memo must include the reasoning of both the majority and minority.

#### **4.7 Committee/Faculty Vote Count**

Within the unit, the reviewing body (e.g., a department, rank-and-tenure committee, or faculty action committee) reviews the File for Action and holds a secret-ballot four-part vote regarding the

scholarship, teaching/or primary responsibilities, and service record of the candidate, as well as the overall action. Members of reviewing bodies may vote yes, no, abstain, or recuse. Abstentions should be a rare exception. Abstentions or recusals cannot be used to signal that the voter did not read the material or is refraining from participating in the review process. No person has more than a single vote in the process of evaluation of a faculty member. If an evaluator has more than one possible opportunity to vote (e.g., a faculty member on the CFA), the *Faculty Manual* requires that the evaluator vote only once and at the lowest level possible (e.g., in the unit rather than in the CFA). The numerical results of the faculty vote are included after the appropriate unredacted internal letter. If the vote is not unanimous, the internal letter must contain both the majority and minority viewpoints. The CFA will not review a file if the internal memos are missing any of these components. The CFA chair will ask the unit to provide them.

#### **4.8 Dean's Evaluation**

The dean's evaluation memo will provide an evaluation of the candidate's performance and role within the unit, university, and their field, and indicate where the dean agrees or disagrees with unit reviewers and why. The dean's evaluation memo must include a recommendation for or against the Faculty Action.

#### **4.9 Communications in the File for Action Review Process**

At each level of review, authors of internal review memos must send copies of the memo to the candidate and to all previous authors of internal reviews or designee (i.e. unit coordinator). These memos will be delivered via e-mail. All vote counts are redacted in the copies of the review memos that go to the candidate and all previous internal levels of review.

Candidates have the option to respond to the internal memo produced at each level of review. They have seven calendar days to do so from the date and time that the memo is sent to them electronically. A candidate wishing to respond to a review memo within the candidate's unit at any stage before the dean's memo should consult the unit coordinator regarding the procedure for doing so. A candidate choosing to respond to a dean's memo should address the response to the Chair of the Committee on Faculty Actions and send it to [facultySenate@american.edu](mailto:facultySenate@american.edu), and send copies to all previous levels of review. A candidate wishing to respond to a CFA memo should address the response to the DOF and send copies to all previous levels of review. Reviewers to whom the candidate is responding do not comment on the candidate's response. It is up to the candidate to verify receipt of a response memo.

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW**

Candidates applying for tenure and/or promotion to associate or full professor have an additional layer of review – an external review by experts in their fields.

### **5.1 Qualification of External Reviewers**

External reviewers are nationally or internationally respected individuals whose areas of expertise qualify them to speak with authority about the candidate and whose professional and personal relationship with the candidate is such that the external reviewers can provide an objective review.

The basic criteria for external reviewers is that (1) they should be recognized subject matter experts who are able to evaluate the strength of the candidate's scholarship, (2) they do not have a personal or professional interest in promoting the candidate's career and can provide an objective, informed assessment, and (3) they hold an academic rank equal to or above that for which the candidate is applying.

Customarily, the majority of these letters must be from faculty members, typically full professors, who are affiliated with highly regarded institutions. In most cases, and appropriately to the discipline, at least two of the letters should come from someone outside the narrower niche within which the scholar works—such a person can provide assurance that the work rests on a solid foundation underlying the narrow area and meets the standards of the field or profession.

### **5.2 Confidentiality of External Reviewers**

The identity of external letter writers remains confidential before, during, and after the review process. Academic units decide whether external letters are completely closed to the candidate or strictly redacted, such that potential identifying characteristics of the author are removed.

### **5.3 Required Number of External Reviewers**

At a minimum, five external reviewer letters are required in the Files for Action for candidates seeking tenure and/or promotion. Soliciting more than five is prudent because of possible disqualification or uncompleted letters. All solicited letters that are received must be included in the file.

### **5.4 Soliciting External Review**

Each academic unit should obtain qualified external reviewers before internal reviews begin. The file should contain a minimum of five letters solicited by the chair, teaching unit/academic unit committee chair, or dean.

The candidate may suggest names, but only a maximum of two of these can be used as actual external reviewers. The candidate may also provide names of persons whom the unit should **not** contact as potential reviewers because they are inappropriate given insufficient arm's length or other reasons. The teaching unit chair or designated committee suggests a majority of reviewers' names. Each candidate decides, in conjunction with the unit, how much of the candidate's work is relevant to include for the external review packet. In general reviewers expect to read a strong representative sample of the work, but not everything on the curriculum vitae.

Those soliciting outside evaluation letters for promotion and/or tenure will consider the following points and properly inform outside reviewers in order to minimize the hazard of having letters disqualified or having reviewers ask for further information:

- External reviews must be obtained from *individuals who have no direct professional or personal interest in the outcome of the faculty action* and are thus able to offer an independent judgment.
- External reviewers who previously wrote letters for the candidate during their promotion or tenure process at AU cannot submit another letter on behalf of the candidate.

Please consult the Provost's December 6, 2018, memorandum titled "Standards for Obtaining Objective External Letters for Tenure and/or Promotion," available at this [link](#).

A template for a request letter to external reviewers is available from the AU portal (myau.american.edu) or on the DOF's website, under "Tenure-track Faculty Reappointments and Promotions."

### **5.5 Time Frame**

It is recommended that units solicit letters from external reviewers by the end of the spring semester, for submission at the beginning of the subsequent academic year when the candidate will submit a File for Action. The spring timeline is encouraged in order to ensure ample time to find willing reviewers. It also gives the reviewers the summer to do the review and to send their written evaluations by the time the academic unit begins the internal review of the candidate in the Fall. Internal levels of review begin only after all external letters have been received.

## **6. ADDITIONAL NOTES ON FILES FOR ACTION**

### **6.1 Promotion to Full Professor or Librarian**

Tenured, continuing appointment, and Library continuing appointment candidates seeking promotion to full professor or librarian submit a File for Action following the outline and format described above, with two differences: (1) only student evaluations for a maximum of six previous years of teaching are needed, and (2) only previous external and internal recommendations for their most recent promotion and tenure (if applicable), including faculty votes, are needed. Materials such as external reviews and votes must be unredacted. Internal letters for reappointment without promotion need not be included.

External letters for promotion to full professor or librarian cannot come from reviewers who previously provided letters for the candidate during the tenure or promotion process at AU.

The File for Action for those seeking promotion after a prior denial of promotion must be as complete and detailed as any File for Action being submitted for the first time. For such a file, **new** external letters must be provided from reviewers who have not previously evaluated the candidate, and the old external letters must also be included in the file. The dean's office must provide unredacted internal letters with faculty votes from the denial as well as from the candidate's promotion/tenure when submitting a subsequent file for promotion to full professor.

### **6.2 Senior Hires with Tenure**

The components of a File for Action for faculty entering the university with tenure and associate or full professor rank will depend to some extent on the uniqueness of the individual case. In general, the CFA expects that the relevant unit will submit:

- Curriculum vitae for the candidate
- Relevant correspondence from the candidate, e.g., a submission letter explaining interest, experience and credentials
- Internal letters, including a letter from the relevant dean and reporting on off-list reference checks by whichever person or committee was responsible for them
- External evaluations, which could include evaluations provided for a recent promotion or evaluations solicited in the process of hiring

- Evidence of teaching experience and quality, e.g., student evaluations, list of courses taught, statement of teaching philosophy or syllabi
- Vote tally of the senior faculty in the candidate's intended home academic unit on the candidate's record of scholarship, teaching, and service
- Vote tally of the senior faculty in the candidate's intended home academic unit on granting tenure for the candidate

In an appendix, the unit will also provide samples of scholarly/creative/professional work. The unit will use the DOF's checklist "Initial Senior Faculty with Tenure" in assembling the file. In exceptional cases, if one of the above-suggested items is missing, the unit will provide an explanation in the form of a separate memorandum from the dean.

### **6.3 Term, Continuing Appointment, and Library Continuing Appointment-line Faculty Actions Involving Disagreements at Unit Level**

Library continuing appointment-line and term faculty actions typically do not go through CFA review and therefore do not require a File for Action as described in this memo. The exception is when disagreements arise within the academic unit. These situations are described below, including materials required for CFA's review process.

- a) Library continuing appointment-line faculty reappointments and promotions do not go through CFA review unless there is a disagreement between the University Library Committee on Faculty Actions and the University Librarian. In the case of such disagreement, the University Librarian will send the file to CFA for review. Such files should include a statement of professional contributions or scholarship as appropriate. No external letters are required. Check with the Office of the University Librarian for details.
- b) Term faculty reappointments and promotions on the professorial lecturer sequence do not go through CFA review unless there is a disagreement among previous levels of review and the disagreement involves issues other than resource availability or academic unit needs. In the case of such disagreement, the dean will send the file to CFA for review.