

**COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL (CAP)  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)**

Revised November 1, 2008

**34. In the external letters of evaluation, what distinguishes "department-nominated" from "candidate" letters?**

Formally, all letters of evaluation are solicited by the Department. "Candidate" letters, however, are those solicited from an official list of names that the candidate provides. These may include doctoral and postdoctoral advisors, collaborators, and colleagues with whom the candidate may have worked in professional contexts, but independent reviewers are preferred. "Candidate" letters evaluate and explain recent research, creative, or professional activity within the designated review period, and may provide insight into the nature of collaborations or details of specific activities or research fields.

External "department-nominated" letters are solicited from people *other than* those on the candidate's official list of potential referees. In promotion cases or appointments at the Associate Professor rank or higher, "department-nominated" letters should be solicited from a slate of expert reviewers who are higher in rank than the candidate. The goal of "department-nominated letters" is to provide objective and analytical reviews of the candidate's work and its impact. Often this includes comparisons with others at the same career stage.

Although letters from the candidate's dissertation advisor, or from other mentors and collaborators with whom the candidate has published in the preceding four years (the current federal standard for defining potential conflict of interest) may be useful, CAP generally gives those letters less weight than letters from reviewers without such affiliations with the candidate.

The UCI-AP-11 form, "Identification and Qualifications of External Referees" (revised 07/08), has a checkbox to identify when the candidate has had a professional relationship to the letter writer (e.g., former advisor/mentor or a collaborator in the preceding four years). When "department-nominated" letters have been solicited from individuals at the same or lower rank, or from former mentors or recent collaborators, this should be noted and explained in the "Qualifications" section of form.

See also FAQ 35 for qualities of good letters and recommended number and mix of external letters.