

Tips for Boston University School of Medicine Promotion Reference Letters

- **You need 6 outside letters of recommendation (LOR) at Associate & Full Professor levels**
- **For Associate and Full Professor, submit to your chair 10 names** in case experts are disallowed or the individuals do not return the letter or recommendation.
- Letter writers should include faculty **at or above the academic rank** for which the candidate is being proposed. If the candidate is going up for an unmodified title, the letter writer cannot have a modified title [e.g. Clinical Professor of Medicine or Research Professor of Medicine].
- Try to include some leading experts in field, and individuals at peer institutions.

| Name, Degrees Academic Rank* Institution Address Email | Relationship to Candidate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The referent must be able to provide an “arm’s length” objective/unbiased LOR, • How does the referent know the candidate? • No prior grants together. • No prior publications together. • If published together, is the publication a guideline or a multi-authored consortium paper in which both authors had minor roles? • Was not a prior mentor or mentee. • Was not from the applicant’s prior institution or training program. | What is the referent’s expertise to evaluate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From peer institution? • If not from a peer institution, why did you select the referent? • What is the referent’s expertise qualifying his/her evaluation of the candidate’s scholarly work? |
|--|---|---|
|--|---|---|

| | | |
|----------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| | Associate Professor | Full Professor |
| Indicate | National recognition | International recognition |

What constitutes an “arm’s length relationship?”

- The purpose of the letter is to provide an **unbiased** opinion of the impact of the candidate’s scholarship on the field. Hence, the letter writer must not have a close personal relationship with the candidate or give the appearance of a close personal relationship.
- Did not train in same institution during an overlapping time period, particularly if the person was a colleague or supervisor.
- Not mentored by the person
- Not had funded grants together. An exception might be if the grants were >5 years ago, or were part of large consortia
- Not published together. Exceptions include guidelines or large consortium papers. However, it is strategic not to only select letter writers from coauthors on guidelines or consortium papers.
- Not a personal friend.

What qualifies as arm’s length? Who are potential useful people to target?

- Try to select peers [research, educational, or clinical] working in your same field who should be familiar with your presentations, work, and publications.
- Editors or section editors of journals for which you review
- Chairs of committees at the national level on which you serve
- Colleagues on committees at the national level
- Leaders who have invited you to speak at national meetings
- Chairs who have invited you to do a visiting professorship or give an invited lecture
- Chairs or members of grant review boards on which you serve
- National officers of your specialty society, particularly if you serve on any committees or regularly speak at the annual meeting
- Leaders at the national level with whom you have interacted in any professional setting
- It may not be a good idea to ask someone who has never met you to write a letter, because they may decline – some minimal professional contact is ideal
- Your Section Chief and the Appointments & Promotions Committee may have suggestions of letter writers for you as well.