HARVARD
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Claudine Gay
Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Wilbur A. Cowett Professor of Government and of African and African American Studies

University Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138

October 12, 2021

Dear faculty colleagues,

I am writing to share with you the report of the FAS Tenure Track Review Committee (TTRC), submitted to me by TTRC Chair, Hopi Hoekstra, Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology, Curator of Mammals in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and of Molecular and Cellular Biology.

As you know, in Fall 2020, I charged TTRC, a committee comprised of 11 tenured faculty members from across the divisions and SEAS, with undertaking a comprehensive review of the FAS tenure-track system. In particular, I asked the committee to examine the processes for promotion to associate professor and promotion to tenured professor. I applaud TTRC for their extraordinary work, including extensive outreach to faculty colleagues and deans across the FAS, careful review of data, thoughtful deliberation, and a comprehensive report documenting their recommendations for my review.

As its overarching conclusion, TTRC found a structurally sound system that nonetheless will benefit from improvements. I believe that their recommendations in this report will move the FAS forward. I also want to highlight a central theme in the report, which I fully endorse. The report calls for a new level of shared responsibility for the tenure-track system among the tenured faculty. This will require a greater degree of senior faculty engagement with our tenure-track colleagues, not just proximate to promotion reviews, but in an ongoing way from the point of hire, symmetrical with our tenure-track colleagues' own continual focus on their journey towards promotion and possible tenure.

Starting this fall, the FAS will begin the complex work of implementation. I am asking the Office for Faculty Affairs to work with me and the divisional and SEAS deans to develop a thoughtful plan for staging the implementation of TTRC recommendations. I expect implementation to take place over the next two years. In the near term, I am asking TTRC members to lead discussions in the coming weeks with the chairs' councils in the three academic divisions and in SEAS, as well as with Faculty Council, to answer any questions colleagues may have about the report. As our work continues, I will keep the Faculty informed of major developments. Your partnership in this work will be not only valued but essential.

OFFICE OF THE DEAN T (617) 495-1566 WWW.FAS.HARVARD.EDU

The FAS's tenure-track system is central to our efforts to build a world-class faculty. Strengthening this system is one of the most important things that we can do. I look forward to working with all of you on the truly exciting task that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Claudine Gay

Report of the FAS Tenure-Track Review Committee (TTRC)

Submitted to Claudine Gay, Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

September 20, 2021

I. Introduction

In AY 2020-2021, Claudine Gay, Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), charged the FAS Tenure Track Review Committee (hereafter, TTRC) with undertaking a comprehensive review of the FAS tenure-track system.

As the charge states:

> "The Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopted a tenure-track system in 2005. In so doing, the FAS moved away from a system in which assistant professors and associate professors were guaranteed neither the right to be reviewed for promotion nor the availability of funding for a tenured position. In the tenure-track system since then, all tenure-track faculty are guaranteed a review according to specific timetables, and if the review is successful and they are promoted, funding is assured for their position.
>
> In the past fifteen years, the FAS has made enormous progress in developing and implementing policies and procedures that increase rigor and consistency in the tenure-track system. Even so, the tenure track continues to reveal areas for possible change. With a decade and a half of data and experience behind us, it is time to comprehensively review our policies and procedures for associate and tenure reviews."

The charge asked the committee to examine reviews for promotion to associate professor and promotion to tenured professor.[1] Broadly speaking, the charge raised fundamental issues such as the following:

- How can we improve our internal (i.e., within Harvard) evaluations of candidates?
- How can we improve external evaluations of candidates?
- How can we foster greater tenured-faculty engagement with the review process and with mentoring candidates throughout the tenure track?
- How can we improve the feedback that the candidate, review committee, and department receive after promotion reviews—not only for the candidate's continuing career development, but also to help the department more effectively mentor others?
- How can we improve review processes to also work well in less typical cases, such as those in small departments, or in emerging and/or interdisciplinary fields, or when the candidate is a member of a standing curricular committee, rather than (or in addition to) being a member of a department?
- Overall, is the tenure clock the right length and are the milestones in the tenure track the right ones?
- How can we increase tenure-track and tenured faculty trust in the tenure review process?
- How can we embed equity more intentionally in our processes, throughout the tenure track?

[1] Please see Appendix 1 for the full text of TTRC's charge.

With these questions in mind, we tackled our work through the process described in Section II below. In Section III, we discuss key issues that we explored and our recommendations. In Section IV, we collect all the recommendations. The report ends with appendices.

Thus, this report is structured as follows:

I. Introduction

II. Committee Work

- A. Committee Membership
- B. Committee Process
  1. Committee Meetings
  2. Outreach to FAS
  3. Data

III. Key Issues and Recommendations

- A. Preamble
  1. The Lived Experience of the Tenure-Track System
  2. Overall Assessment of the Tenure-Track System
- B. Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews
  1. Time to Tenure and Associate Tenure
  2. What is the Purpose of the Associate Review?
  3. Aligning the Associate Review, Tenure Review, and 2nd-Year Review
  4. Criteria for Associate Promotion
  5. Defining the Field
  6. Information About the Candidate
  7. Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews
- C. External Letters and Internal Letters
  1. External Letters
  2. Internal Letters
- D. Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring
  1. Role in Promotion Reviews
  2. Distinct Categories of Activity and Assessment
  3. Developmental Approach
  4. Teaching Portfolio
  5. Teaching Statement
  6. Evaluating Classroom Teaching: Multiple Metrics
  7. Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support
  8. Support for Tenured Faculty
- E. Service
  1. Role in Promotion Reviews
  2. Recommendations
- F. COVID-19
  1. Impact on Academic Development and Achievement
  2. Current Measures
  3. Recommendations
- G. Ad Hoc Process

1. TTRC's Remit
2. What is the Ad Hoc?
3. The "Black Box" of the Ad Hoc
4. University Viewpoints
5. CAP and the Ad Hoc
6. Moving Forward

IV. Collected Recommendations

V. Appendices

II. Committee Work

A. Committee Membership

The Tenure Track Review Committee was chaired by Hopi Hoekstra, Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology, Curator of Mammals in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and of Molecular and Cellular Biology. The committee included ten other tenured faculty, from the divisions of the Arts and Humanities, Social Science, and Science, as well as the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS). These members[2] were:

- Joanna Aizenberg, Amy Smith Berylson Professor of Materials Science and Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology
- Mahzarin Banaji, Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics
- David Charbonneau, Professor of Astronomy and Harvard College Professor
- David Cutler, Otto Eckstein Professor of Applied Economics
- Maya Jasanoff, Coolidge Professor of History and X.D. and Nancy Yang Professor of Arts and Sciences
- Melissa McCormick, Professor of Japanese Art and Culture
- Ann Pearson, Murray and Martha Ross Professor of Environmental Sciences and Harvard College Professor
- Jennifer Roberts, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities
- Tommie Shelby, Caldwell Titcomb Professor of African and African American Studies and of Philosophy
- Gu-Yeon Wei, Robert and Suzanne Case Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

In addition, Nina Zipser, Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning, served *ex officio*; Lisa Mincieli, Director of Special Projects in the FAS Office for Faculty Affairs (OFA), served as data analyst and provided staff support; and Andrea Shen, Associate Director in OFA, provided staff support.

B. Committee Process

1. Committee Meetings

[2] The list of TTRC members is also available as Appendix 2.

As a full committee, TTRC met nine times via Zoom (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), from October 2020 to May 2021. In addition, we worked in three subcommittees, to delve deeper into these areas of the charge: (1) associate reviews, (2) external letters and internal letters, and (3) teaching, advising, and mentoring. The committee identified these areas as high-priority, both because there was clear room for improvement (as evidenced through input from the faculty and the committee's own research) and because those improvements could have a significant impact on the tenure-track process. We knew that these areas overlapped with each other and that work in any one area would bring in other important aspects of the tenure-track system. These subcommittees were a tool to help us traverse an enormous territory. Each subcommittee met several times, worked among themselves and with the other subcommittees by Zoom, email, and shared Google documents, and reported back to the full committee.

Subcommittee members:

- Associate Reviews: David Charbonneau (chair), Melissa McCormick, Jennifer Roberts
- External Letters and Internal Letters: Tommie Shelby (chair), Joanna Aizenberg, David Cutler
- Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring: Maya Jasanoff (chair), Ann Pearson, Gu-Yeon Wei.

2. Outreach to FAS

TTRC also conducted outreach to FAS faculty and administrators. Our goal was to better understand colleagues' experiences with the tenure-track system, their views on what was most in need of change, and their suggestions for improvement. We benefited enormously from colleagues' comments, gaining a much richer understanding of people's experiences across ranks, departments/areas,[3] and divisions/SEAS. Our colleagues brought myriad facets of the tenure-track system to light, or into focus. We include many of their voices in this report (anonymized[4], as people wrote or spoke to us confidentially), and we wish to express our gratitude to all of our faculty colleagues, the assistant deans, deans and other administrators in the FAS, the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP), Provost Alan Garber, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity Judith Singer, and President Lawrence Bacow. Everyone's comments not only shed light on technical aspects of associate reviews and tenure reviews, they brought to life the felt experience of working with, and being on, the FAS tenure track.

As the table below shows in more detail, TTRC met with:

- Tenure-track faculty (each division/SEAS separately)
- Recently tenured faculty (across all divisions/SEAS)
- Department chairs and SEAS area chairs (and other SEAS Steering Committee members) (each division/SEAS separately)
- The Divisional Deans, Harvard John A. Paulson Dean of SEAS, and Assistant Deans for Faculty Affairs
- The Chair of the Standing Committee on Women (SCW)

[3] In much of this report, for shorthand, we use the term "department" to refer to both departments (in the divisions) and areas (in SEAS), while recognizing that these units bear different names.
[4] With the exception of Provost Garber, Senior Vice Provost Singer, and President Bacow, as appropriate, who either shared their comments in a public forum or indicated willingness to have their views shared.

- The Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- The Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Development and the Assistant Dean for Faculty Development
- The Dean of Undergraduate Education and the Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives in the Office for Undergraduate Education (OUE)
- The Edgerley Family Dean of the FAS and her Academic Planning Group (APG includes the Divisional Deans, SEAS Dean, Danoff Dean of Harvard College, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences [GSAS], Dean of the Division of Continuing Education, Interim Dean for Administration and Finance, Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning, and Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging)
- The FAS Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP)
- The Senior Vice-Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity
- The Provost
- The President

We also canvassed all FAS ladder faculty via an announcement by Dean Gay at an October 2020 Faculty Meeting and a follow-up email from TTRC inviting colleagues to write to us at ttrc@fas.harvard.edu. Over the next several months, we received more than 30 emails from ladder faculty, including three emails representing numerous faculty (with, respectively, 51, 20, and 12 members represented).

In addition, following each of our Zoom meetings with the department/area chairs in each division and in SEAS, we sent all chairs a questionnaire to help us understand departmental practices in relation to the tenure-track system. The chairs of 17 departments completed our questionnaire.

We regret that we were unable to meet with Faculty Council before they adjourned for the AY 2020-2021 academic year.

TTRC Outreach	Date
TTRC Chair Hopi Hoekstra discusses the tenure-track system with the FAS Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP)[5]	9/23/2020
TTRC charge, member list, and ttrc@fas.harvard.edu email address are posted on the FAS Faculty Resources website	10/5/2020
At FAS Faculty Meeting, Dean Claudine Gay notifies faculty of the TTRC information posted on the FAS Faculty Resources website	10/6/2020

[5] The AY 2020-2021 members of CAP were: Lawrence Bobo, Dean of Social Science; Melani Cammett, Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs in the Department of Government; Amanda Claybaugh, Dean of Undergraduate Education; Emma Dench, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; Francis Doyle III, John A. Paulson Dean of the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences; Laura Fisher, Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Development; Claudine Gay, Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Robin Kelsey, Dean of Arts and Humanities; Rakesh Khurana, Danoff Dean of Harvard College; Jeffrey McDonough, Professor of Philosophy; David Mooney, Robert P. Pinkas Family Professor of Bioengineering; Christopher Stubbs, Dean of Science; Nina Zipser, Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning; and Hopi Hoekstra, Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and Molecular and Cellular Biology and Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology in the Museum of Comparative Zoology.

TTRC Chair Hopi Hoekstra discusses the ad hoc process with Judith Singer, Senior Vice-Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity	10/8/2020
TTRC emails all FAS ladder faculty, inviting feedback on the tenure-track system, at ttrc@fas.harvard.edu	10/9/2020
TTRC meets with Arts and Humanities department chairs and divisional dean Robin Kelsey, with a follow-up TTRC questionnaire sent to all chairs	11/12/2020
TTRC meets with Science department chairs and divisional dean Christopher Stubbs, with a follow-up TTRC questionnaire sent to all chairs	11/16/2020
TTRC meets with Divisional/SEAS Assistant Deans for Faculty Affairs (Zoe Fonseca-Kelly, Ellen Furxhi, Chris Kruegler, Diane Schneeberger) and Assistant Dean for Faculty Development (Jasmine Waddell), for their perspectives on the tenure-track system	11/17/2020
TTRC meets with CAP to discuss CAP's role and perspectives on the tenure-track system	11/18/2020
TTRC meets with Social Science department chairs and divisional dean Lawrence Bobo, with a follow-up TTRC questionnaire sent to all chairs	11/19/2020
TTRC meets with SEAS Steering Committee[6] (i.e., SEAS Dean Francis Doyle III, area chairs, and SEAS senior leaders), with a follow-up TTRC questionnaire sent to all chairs	12/2/2020
TTRC meets with Laura Fisher, Senior Associate Dean, Office for Faculty Development, to discuss her experiences and views on the tenure-track system, including recruitment and retention	12/4/2020
TTRC attends town hall on the ad hoc process, hosted by President Lawrence Bacow and Provost Alan Garber	12/4/2020
TTRC holds town hall for all Tenure Track Faculty: Arts & Humanities Division	12/11/2020
TTRC holds town hall for all Tenure Track Faculty: Social Science Division	12/14/2020
TTRC holds town hall for all Tenure Track Faculty: Science Division & SEAS	12/15/2020
TTRC meets with Provost Alan Garber and Senior Vice-Provost Judith Singer, on what makes a strong tenure case	1/19/2021
TTRC Teaching/Advising/Mentoring Subcommittee meets with Emma Dench, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, to discuss graduate advising and mentoring	1/20/2021
TTRC Teaching/Advising/Mentoring Subcommittee meets with Amanda Claybaugh, Dean of Undergraduate Education, and Gillian Pierce, Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, to discuss undergraduate teaching/advising/mentoring	1/21/2021
TTRC meets with recently tenured faculty, to discuss their experiences and views on the tenure-track system	2/5/2021
TTRC Chair Hopi Hoekstra meets with Academic Planning Group[7] to discuss TTRC's evolving recommendations	3/29/2021

[6] In attendance at the 12/2/2020 SEAS Steering Committee meeting were SEAS Dean Francis Doyle III and SEAS members Diane Schneeberger, Eddie Kohler, Eric Mazur, Diana Johansen, Paul Karoff, Samir Mitragotri, Alexis Stokes, David Clarke, Todd Zickler, Dan Schrag, Fawwaz Habbal, and Tim Bowman.

[7] Members of the Spring 2021 Academic Planning Group were: FAS Dean Claudine Gay; Divisional Deans Lawrence Bobo, Robin Kelsey, Christopher Stubbs and SEAS Dean Francis Doyle III; Rakesh Khurana, Danoff Dean of Harvard College; Emma Dench, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; Nancy Coleman, Dean of the Division of

TTRC meets with Sheree Ohen, Associate Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, to discuss equity issues in the tenure-track system	4/13/2021
TTRC meets with Anne Shreffler, James Edward Ditson Professor of Music and chair of the Standing Committee on Women, to discuss TTRC's evolving recommendations	4/14/2021
TTRC meets with Gillian Pierce, Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, to discuss TTRC's evolving recommendations on teaching, advising, and mentoring.	4/27/2021

3. Data

TTRC's deliberations were also informed by qualitative and quantitative data, the majority of which was prepared for the committee by Lisa Mincieli, Director of Special Projects in OFA and data analyst for TTRC.

Data reviewed by TTRC included:

- *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* (sections relevant to the tenure-track system)
- FAS Tenure-Track Handbook
- Review of peer institutions' tenure-track systems
- Twelve-year analyses of tenure-track completion rates, by FAS division/SEAS, gender, ethnicity, and six-year cohort (from AY 2008-2009 through AY 2019-2020)
- Quantitative analyses of tenure outcomes, from the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP) stage to the ad hoc committee stage (from AY 2009-2010 through AY 2019-2020)
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses of external letters in tenure review dossiers. E.g., average number of letters solicited and received, by division/SEAS; numbers of letters solicited and received and reasons for letter writers declining, in successful tenure cases and unsuccessful tenure cases (from AY 2016-2017 through AY 2019-2020)
- Quantitative analyses of departmental votes in tenure review cases (from AY 2016-2017 through AY 2019-2020)
- Working paper by Nina Zipser and Lisa Mincieli: "The relationship between Q scores and tenure promotion outcomes"
- Paper by Nina Zipser, Lisa Mincieli, and Dmitry Kurochkin: "Are there Gender Differences in Quantitative Student Evaluations of Instructors?" *Research in Higher Education (2021) DOI:10.1007/s11162-021-09628-w*
- Redacted, fully anonymized departmental letters to candidates following their 2nd-year-review (for all divisions/SEAS)
- Redacted, fully anonymized departmental letters to candidates following their associate review (for all divisions/SEAS)
- Fully anonymized, high-level summary of themes in faculty exit interviews

Continuing Education; Mary Ann Bradley, Interim Dean for Administration and Finance; Nina Zipser, Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning; and Sheree Ohen, Associate Dean of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

- Summary of post-Harvard career paths of FAS associate professors who were not tenured (from AY 08-09 to AY 19-20)
- FAS departmental mentoring plans
- FAS faculty emails to ttrc@fas.harvard.edu
- FAS department chair responses to TTRC questionnaire about departmental practices related to the tenure-track system.
- 2017 Harvard University Self-Study for Reaccreditation: section on the FAS tenure-track system.
- 2009 memo from FAS Dean Michael D. Smith to the faculty regarding changes in the promotion processes.

Findings from the data above are cited throughout Section III ("Key Issues and Recommendations") below.

III. Key Issues and Recommendations

In this section, we describe our thinking and recommendations concerning several aspects of the tenure-track system. We approach this discussion by way of our subcommittee topics – associate reviews, external and internal letters, and teaching, advising, and mentoring – and, given the interconnected nature of issues and elements in the tenure-track system, we freely refer to other topics in each section, as the discussion calls for it. We then move on to discussions of service, Covid-19, and the ad hoc process. While the ad hoc stage of the tenure-review process lay beyond TTRC's charge, we address it in this report, given the strength of colleagues' concerns.

A. Preamble

1. The Lived Experience of the Tenure Track System

We begin by painting a general picture of how many of our colleagues experience the FAS tenure-track system. No picture can be completely representative, as we heard comments ranging from satisfaction with the current system to serious concern. Nonetheless, throughout this report, we attempt to give voice to our colleagues.

The journey towards tenure is stressful for candidates, and it is also high stakes for the institution. For the candidate, tenure of course means a lifetime position at a world-class institution, greater freedom in pursuing their scholarship, the challenge of working with bright students and talented researchers, and the ability to set down roots and grow in an intellectual community. For Harvard, tenure is, as the President and Provost have often said, the most important decision Harvard makes. It is a lifetime investment into someone who will, through all these activities—research, teaching, advising, and mentoring, and service—help to shape what Harvard is and what it will be.

In our outreach meetings, tenure-track and recently tenured faculty attested to the stress of working towards tenure. They noted the physical and emotional toll, and the coping mechanisms they developed.

One tenure-track colleague said, "None of the faculty have said to me, 'this is an 8-year postdoc,' but they have said, your mental health will be improved if you treat this as though [it is]. That's worked for me….I could kill myself doing this, I could wreck my marriage, I could put off having children, or I could have the best possible time here while I'm here."

The stress of being on the tenure track is, to some extent, unavoidable. The bar is high for tenure at Harvard, tenure is not guaranteed, and not everyone will get tenure. Moreover, the process inherently centers on judgement: whether an individual is considered "successful" enough as a researcher, teacher, and colleague. These aspects of being reviewed for tenure cannot change. But other factors also contribute to the difficulty of the experience.

As we heard from colleagues, the already high stakes of getting or not getting tenure are made even higher by the poor job market. This varies by discipline, but as one colleague in the arts and humanities said, their perception is that not getting tenure doesn't just mean leaving Harvard for an academic post elsewhere, it can mean the end of one's academic career. **"**All of us at the assistant, associate level, much as we may love Harvard, there's nowhere else for us to go. We can't try to get other jobs because there aren't other jobs. What follows is, a decision on tenure is no longer a decision about whether your work is good or bad, or whether you should remain at Harvard or go to another institution, it's whether you'll be drummed out of the profession."[8]

The Covid-19 pandemic has also upended people's work patterns and personal lives and increased some colleagues' anxiety about how their tenure-track years will be evaluated. (Please see Section III.F, "Covid-19," for a fuller discussion of the pandemic and the tenure-track system.)

In addition, many tenure-track faculty report uncertainty about the nuts-and-bolts of promotion processes, the standard by which they'll be judged, and/or what they need to do to meet that standard. This uncertainty can be compounded by a similar lack of clarity (or contradictory messages) on the part of senior colleagues. This lack of clarity, for all faculty, can stem from colleagues not being familiar with (the most recent version) of the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and the *Tenure Track Handbook,* as well as opacity or insufficient detail in these handbooks at times. In addition, tenured colleagues themselves came up for tenure at different times—anywhere from a year ago to several decades ago—and thus may have different understandings of how the process works, what the standard is, or how to meet that standard.

Sheree Ohen, Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, notes that differing academic backgrounds, identities, and unequal access to networks can also impact a candidate's understanding of the tenure standard. "People may be acculturated to a different standard at different institutions. So it's not a natural translation of knowledge when they come to Harvard….This is an elusive standard of excellence: what it means to be tenurable at Harvard. How is that different from being tenured at another institution? This is where equity comes in. If standards are already elusive, and those in-the-know know what it means, women and communities of color who aren't engaged in those networks won't know what that means.'"

[8] If of some comfort, while recognizing that the current job market differs from that in past years, TTRC examined career outcomes for 59 unsuccessful tenure cases between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2019-2020. The majority of these faculty have remained in academe. Specifically, 71% found faculty positions at other universities; 12% found museum/research positions; 12% found "other" positions, including in administration, industry, etc., and we were unable to find information on the remaining 5%.

Another murky area for many faculty (both tenure-track and tenured) is how decisions are made in CAP and the ad hoc[9] stage of the tenure review process. In one tenured faculty member's view, the tenure-review process "has been conceived as a closed box, whose credibility depends on its tightness. Absolute transparency is impossible and as awful as absolute opacity. In between, there are ways to mediate the process, and make it more humane, more effective, and less wasteful."

Faculty anxiety about the tenure-track system has also been exacerbated by some recent, high-profile, unsuccessful tenure cases whose outcome was described by colleagues as surprising to the department. Objectively, the number of cases that fail after the ad hoc is relatively small. According to data from the Office for Faculty Affairs, of the 163 tenure promotion cases that were successful through the department and at CAP between AY 2009-2010 and AY2019-2020, 23 (14%) failed after an ad hoc review. The other 140 (86%) either were approved without an ad hoc or after a successful ad hoc review. However, regardless of these numbers, the impact of each unsuccessful case on the candidate, department, and beyond can be considerable. Some colleagues argue that the department knows the candidate and their work best, has worked closely with them for years, and is best qualified to assess whether that person merits tenure. When a department recommends tenure and CAP moves the case forward to an ad hoc committee, it can be extremely disappointing when tenure is ultimately denied. Moreover, because there is little feedback to the candidate or department after the ad hoc stage of the process, the candidate and colleagues may not know why a case did not succeed. As the former chair of a department said, "I…had to deliver the news with no justification or explanation, no appeal, no possibility to figure out what one did wrong."

Another tenured faculty member said, "I think this system is fundamentally inhumane, specifically because the candidate receives no feedback….Our tenure-track faculty spend seven years with us, building relationships, working hard, sharing their talents with our students, etc. But then, if tenure is denied, they are offered no insight into what went wrong. For candidates who had seemed to be doing everything right, this turns their world upside down. In addition to the inevitable disappointment…in the absence of feedback the faculty face a wave of self-doubt for which no solace can be offered….When…no feedback is provided, it is completely bewildering. It is not how most human relationships work. Yes, this isn't a normal human relationship, but every other aspect of tenure-track life does involve the usual collegiality and decency we expect in human relationships. So why withhold that at the crucial moment?"

The impact of an unsuccessful tenure case can be magnified in smaller departments. As one tenured faculty member said, "The effects of a non-tenure decision on a department are intensely disruptive. In a small department a non-tenure decision means that a whole area of coverage is knocked out straight away. It can introduce years of instability in the teaching and advising programs and have a serious effect on graduate recruitment. It indicates to the rest of the world that Harvard is not interested in fostering new talent or specific areas of study. These factors would perhaps not be noticed in a larger department with more faculty to cushion the blow."

Without feedback about why a tenure case failed, some senior colleagues say that they feel unable to effectively mentor junior colleagues, because they feel they have no control over, or ability to predict,

[9] As we discuss further in Section III.G ("Ad Hoc Process"), the ad hoc committee is advisory to the President and the Provost, and final decisions on tenure cases are made by the President.

the outcome. To some, the system seems random, and because of this randomness, some tenure-track colleagues feel that they cannot trust the advice their senior colleagues give them.

As one recently tenured faculty member said, "No one that I had close contact with—mentors, department chairs, colleagues, even divisional deans—could say anything meaningful or reliable to me about what would make my case stronger or more likely to succeed because they themselves did not really know. I spent a lot of time listening to advice that I knew was well-intentioned, openly supportive, and meant to help me succeed, but I never believed for a second that if I followed this advice it would translate into a successful promotion outcome. Instead, I assumed two things: 1) that whatever I was told I needed to do, I should do significantly more, looking to people outside the university for reliable scholarly and professional development; 2) that in order to protect my career in the long run, I needed to get out as soon as a viable opportunity presented itself. These psychologically and professionally necessary strategies, practiced over 7 years, resulted in a positive tenure outcome but they had many negative consequences as well."

Given all the factors described above, there is a lack of trust in, and a low morale, about the tenure process among many tenure-track and tenured faculty; and in some parts of the FAS, the mistrust and low morale are profound.

One recently tenured colleague stated that they cannot, in good conscience, advise prospective faculty to accept a tenure-track position at Harvard, given the seeming "randomness" of the tenure outcome.

"[There is an] 11th-hour variability. Right at the very end, after you've worked for six and a half or seven years, there are all these elements where something could go off the rails, that you have no control over….Is it the ad hoc level? Is it the CAP level? Is it the review-committee-chair level?....I've had the smoothest, best possible experience on the tenure track….[but] in retrospect, I think it was probably the riskiest decision of my career to accept a [tenure-track] offer from Harvard. If I knew what I know now about the process…I don't think I could have ethically persuaded my graduate school self to accept the job. I find myself now in that position of being on hiring committees and having to answer totally legitimate questions from future colleagues about what the tenure process is like, and I can't in good faith or conscience, if they have other offers, say, yes, try this out. And of course it will be hard, the Harvard tenure track has to be grueling. The whole point is we become better than we were to start with, by the intensity of the experience and the resources and the colleagues and the inspiration. But it's too risky. In my field, it's too risky. So if someone has a different offer from a different institution, I feel I have to recommend they take that offer. That tells me something is very seriously amiss, in terms of our ability to recruit the people we want to recruit."

Contributing to this mistrust and low morale is a perhaps inaccurate sense that what is happening in one department/area or division/SEAS might be universal across the FAS, when in fact TTRC has been struck by how different experiences and outcomes are across departments/areas and divisions/SEAS. In our outreach meetings, departments/areas and divisions/SEAS reported different processes, experiences, and concerns, some diametrically opposed to others. In our meetings with CAP and with the President, Provost, and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, these senior leaders reported inconsistency across departments in, for instance, how closely they followed procedures in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*, how they evaluated teaching, advising, and mentoring, how candid they were in assessing both strengths and weaknesses in case statements, how long and/or substantive their faculty's internal letters were, and more broadly, how the department guided a tenure-track colleague through the review process. Thus, we both recognize and support the legitimate concerns of colleagues who feel mistrust and low morale about the tenure track system and caution against generalizing experiences to the whole.

To be clear, lack of trust within the tenure-track system can run in multiple directions—not only from tenure-track faculty towards tenured faculty, and from tenured faculty towards the CAP and ad hoc stages of the review process, but also, at times, from CAP and ad hoc committees towards departments, when cases fail to acknowledge or discuss candidate weaknesses as well as strengths. CAP and ad hoc members may see other efforts to, seemingly, "game" the system—not only in case statements that hold back from critical assessment, but also in the choice of external letter writers or comparands. Within departments, as well, there can be trust issues, when faculty seem to factionalize with other faculty.

In sum, the lived experience of the tenure-track system, for both tenure-track and tenured faculty, includes stress as well as varying degrees of mistrust and dissatisfaction. But the sources of these problems are both internal and external, and not all of these factors are beyond our individual and collective control to change. We cannot, of course, will changes to the pandemic, the academic job market, or the inherent nature of going up for tenure, where the bar is necessarily high at Harvard and the nature of being "judged" is inevitably stressful. But TTRC sees ample room for improvement in other ways, aided by better education about the tenure-track system, improved communication between stages of the process, and structural or systemic changes, all of which we discuss in the report below.

In addition to the issues touched on above, the success of the tenure-track system is, of course, highly dependent on the success of the FAS's hiring process. Who we bring into the tenure track (and why), not just the tenure track itself, shapes the quality and composition of the faculty. In our outreach, some faculty expressed the enduring view that if they don't hire someone in a search, they will lose the faculty line, i.e., the opportunity to hire anyone at all. While this assumption is largely inaccurate, as searches can be (and most often are) reauthorized, departments may make quick hires when they could have instead started a re-authorized search. Some faculty also said that departments may hire within narrow parameters (e.g., in highly specific subfields, to replace a departing colleague or to fill a specific role in teaching, curation, or advising) rather than engaging in big-picture thinking about what it means to make their department the best in the field. Searches may also focus on well-defined fields, rather than emerging or interdisciplinary areas. A more flexible approach that allows faculty to actively identify exciting and diverse tenure-track colleagues may be considered. While FAS hiring practices are beyond TTRC's charge, we wish to flag this as an important subject. Hiring practices are key to the success of the tenure-track system and worthy of future attention by a faculty committee, the deans, and the FAS Dean.

2. Overall Assessment of the Tenure-Track System

While our account of the "lived experience of the tenure-track system" may cause some to think that the system is fundamentally "broken" and in need of wholesale replacement, in fact, based on the totality of our work, TTRC has reached a somewhat different conclusion.

Based on the data we studied (both from Harvard and our peer institutions), the voluminous comments from colleagues in our outreach, and our deliberations, our overall assessment is that, in some ways, the FAS tenure-track system works well. We believe the system is structurally sound: it has checks and balances (e.g., internal and external evaluations, and four levels of assessment, from the review committee to the department to CAP to the ad hoc committee) and is designed to ground promotion decisions in ample evidence.

Objectively, the data show that the tenure-track system, when examined as a whole, is performing adequately, in the sense that tenure-track faculty are reviewed on a regular basis and the majority are promoted, although tenure rates vary across disciplines. From AY 2009-2010 through AY 2019-2020, of the 239 assistant professors who stood for their associate promotion review, 97% were successful. In the more rigorous tenure promotion process, 70% of those who stood for the review were successful.

However, we do see many significant changes that can be made, to enable the system to work better. We believe these changes will help the FAS to do a better job of:

- preparing candidates for reviews (and reducing the stress they experience on the tenure track)
- improving the quality of information received from external and internal letter writers, and making the process less onerous for these writers
- making more "real" the FAS's commitment to teaching, advising, mentoring, and service as important elements in a faculty member's career, and more effectively measuring these activities
- reviewing candidates more rigorously, with greater engagement from tenured faculty
- increasing transparency and providing better feedback to the candidate, review committee, and the department after reviews
- revamping the associate review and better aligning it with the tenure review
- recognizing differences among departments/areas and divisions/SEAS, but also standardizing procedures to the extent that is desirable and appropriate
- mitigating bias and embedding equity throughout the tenure-track system.

Even as we propose significant changes in this report, we wish to reiterate some unchangeable facts. As mentioned earlier in this "Preamble," the bar is high for tenure at Harvard, tenure is not guaranteed, and not everyone will get tenure. Harvard does and should take some risks in their hires, and we do not expect that all those risks will ultimately be successful. In TTRC's view, stress, frustration, and disappointment will always be a part of faculty members' experience with the tenure-track system. No amount of change will do away with these issues entirely. Nonetheless, in this report, we make recommendations with the goal of making the system as effective, fair, and transparent as it can be.

B. Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews

1. Time to Tenure and Associate Tenure

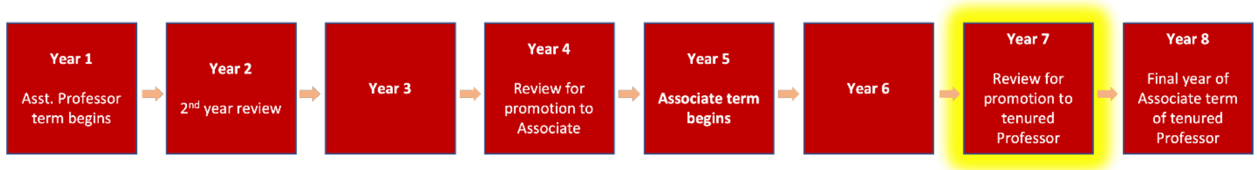
In this section, we look at the overall timeline in the FAS's tenure-track system. Is our tenure clock the right length, and are the stages in the tenure track the right ones?

In our discussions with colleagues, time to tenure was often conflated with whether Harvard should tenure at the associate rank. Therefore, we carefully attempt to separate these two issues. We discuss each in turn below.

For context, TTRC looked closely at eight peer institutions and compared both (1) the time to tenure, and (2) the level at which tenure is granted: associate professor or full professor.

a) Time to Tenure

At Harvard, as shown in the graphic below,[10] assistant professors are ordinarily reviewed for promotion to associate professor in their fourth year, and if they are promoted, they are ordinarily reviewed for promotion to tenured full professor in their seventh year.[11]



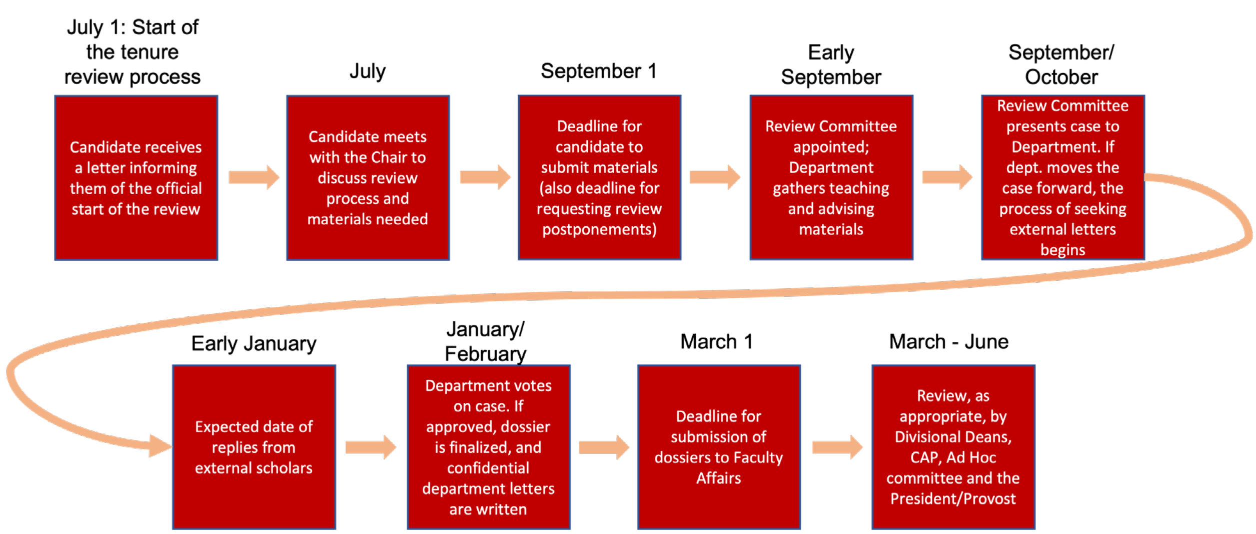
This tenure clock is similar to that of some peers and slightly longer than other peers'.

The FAS is similar to Yale, Stanford, and M.I.T., who also have reviews at Year 4 and Year 7, although at Yale and Stanford the 4th-year review is to determine a second assistant-professor term (rather than promotion to associate professor), and in their Year 7 review, Yale and M.I.T. tenure at either the associate professor or full professor rank (Yale seems ordinarily to tenure at the associate professor rank). Stanford tenures only at the associate professor rank in Year 7.

Princeton, Columbia, and Cornell conduct a review in Year 3 (a year earlier than Harvard), for a second assistant professor term. Princeton and Cornell then conduct a tenure review in Year 6 (a year earlier

---

[10] For general use throughout this report, we also include here a more detailed picture of the tenure-review process in Year 7.[10]



[11] Please see the AY 2021-2022 *FAS Appointment Handbook* or *FAS Tenure Track Handbook* for more information on the FAS tenure-track timeline.

than Harvard), at the rank of tenured associate professor. Columbia reviews in Year 5 for untenured associate, followed by a Year 7 review (like Harvard) for tenure (at associate professor) and then full professor, usually several years later.

Like Princeton and Cornell, the University of Michigan and Berkeley also conduct their tenure review in Year 6. Michigan and Berkeley offer tenure at the associate professor rank.

Thus, the timing of Harvard's reviews does differ from some, but not all, of our peers. Most often, when we differ, we tenure one year later than our peers do.

Some faculty feel that Harvard's longer time to tenure has distinct disadvantages (please also see Section III.B.1.b below, "Associate Tenure").

The Standing Committee on Women told TTRC that "the current tenure process does not have any formal way to account for the disproportionate burden of service labor, advising, and mentorship for women and faculty of color, particularly underrepresented minorities and URM women." As this disparity in service load compounds over time, the SCW posits that a longer time to tenure will disproportionately disadvantage women and underrepresented minorities.

Some FAS faculty spoke in favor of Harvard's current clock. As one tenured faculty member said, "A long clock is a good thing because it gives us some flexibility. Different people do different types of research. Some people do work that needs time to incubate. It's good we give ourselves that flexibility. If you have someone being poached, you can always accelerate, and should be more willing to accelerate, in the face of competition. But I wouldn't want to blanket shorten the clock. That would put too much pressure on those who need a longer time to incubate."

Other faculty agreed, especially as Harvard often hires people who are starting new fields or working at the boundaries of multiple disciplines and may need time to develop. More time also means more data for departments, CAP, and the ad hoc to make informed decisions – data accumulated as the candidate establishes their scholarship and an international reputation, teaches multiple classes and develops their skills as a teacher, advisor, and mentor, as well as performs service and becomes a citizen of the Harvard community. In theory, more data will help to decrease any "randomness" in the system.

Moreover, some research suggests that women and underrepresented minorities can benefit from having a comparatively longer time to tenure. Individuals may, in some cases, need additional time to build networks and learn "the system." Dean Ohen notes, for instance, that when it comes to gaining social and political capital, "That's a learned thing. If you can tap into networks, you'll know [things], but if you don't, you're not included in the circles that transfer that informal information…. [Faculty] need to get connected to those informal networks."

One faculty member said (although this was not a widely heard view) that, depending on the field, candidates may even want more time before the associate review. Because of the nature of work in this person's field, where experiments have long time frames and publishing is slow, their associate review evaluated projects that they had begun in graduate school, rather than more recent work. "That was a source of stress and education for me. How many people in the field are being asked to sit down and think carefully about me, but not based on anything I've started in the last three or four years?"

b) Associate Tenure

While some faculty argued that time to tenure was an important issue, others disagreed and stated that the key issue is the lack of associate tenure coupled with the uncertainty of Harvard's tenure outcomes. Many of Harvard's peers tenure at the associate professor rank, whereas Harvard tenures at full professor.

As one tenured faculty member said, "What I see over and over is men, women, minorities, everyone, moving to other institutions to accept associate tenure who are quite brilliant. It's hard to mentor an assistant or untenured associate professor in terms of what they can expect from [Harvard's] tenure process. It's hard to tell them what's required of them. Given that, they take these other offers."

This vulnerability to poaching is a chief argument among those who would like Harvard to tenure at the associate professor rank. As one faculty member said, many Harvard faculty who pass their associate review are tenurable at other schools. Even if, ultimately, they may become a full professor at Harvard sooner than they would at schools which tenure first at associate and then at full, "that doesn't compute for someone who doesn't have tenure. The real difference is tenure or no tenure. So it becomes very difficult to make an argument that convinces junior faculty to stay." This colleague, and others, note that poaching can impact diversity. "It really affects our ability to retain faculty. In terms of the diversity piece of this, I find we're especially vulnerable when it comes to incredibly talented minority faculty, who are the first to get poached. If we really want to retain our minority faculty, it would make sense to think about this."

As the quotes above highlight, many advocates for associate tenure primarily focused on the timing of tenure relative to other institutions. As discussed in Section III.B.1.a ("Time to Tenure"), Harvard tenures at the equivalent year to some (e.g., Yale, Stanford, M.I.T., and Columbia), but one year later than others (e.g., Princeton, Berkeley, Michigan, Cornell).

However, other colleagues discussed more directly the implications of tenuring at the full professor rank. Some faculty said the discrepancy between Harvard tenuring at full professor and many other schools tenuring at the associate professor rank has an impact on evaluations. For example, when Harvard asks external letter writers to assess a person for "tenure," Harvard has its full professor standard in mind, whereas the letter writer may apply standards for tenure at the associate level. Alternatively, they may apply *their* "tenure at full professor" standard, effectively comparing Harvard's candidate after seven years (when Harvard promotes to full professor) to candidates promoted to that rank after, say, 10-12 years (times vary widely both within and across institutions).

Some faculty note that tenuring first at associate and then promoting to full professor incentivizes faculty to stay engaged beyond the first stage of tenure. Others point out that tenuring at the full professor rank is an advantage of the Harvard system – in a sense, the opportunity to jump through two hoops at one time.

The importance of tenuring at the associate professor (versus the full professor rank) seems to vary by field. In some fields, the distinction between the associate rank and full professor rank is not well defined. In other fields, there are sharper distinctions between the qualifications for one rank or another (e.g., whether one has published one book or two), and having two ranks is more meaningful.

Ultimately, we recommend maintaining the current length of the associate professor term. The time to tenure is already long, relative to some of our peers, and extending the term would make us less competitive in hiring and retaining colleagues. Conversely, shortening the tenure clock could curtail the development of novel, risky, and interdisciplinary research, disadvantage women and faculty of color, and result in less data needed to make the most informed tenure decisions.

We also recommend continuing to tenure only at the full professor rank. We believe the key issue is tenure or no tenure, i.e., whether a colleague merits a life-time position at Harvard, not the title that accompanies tenure. While we recognize differences across fields, we endorse Harvard's single standard for tenure, rather than two standards for two different ranks. However, we believe that the FAS can effectively address underlying reasons that some faculty advocate for a switch to associate tenure, as we discuss in Section III.4 ("Criteria for Associate Promotion") below.

2. What Is the Purpose of the Associate Review?

In examining the review for promotion to associate professor, TTRC wrestled with this basic question: What is the purpose of the associate review?

Is its purpose to gather as much useful feedback on the candidate as possible, to help the candidate prepare for tenure? Is its function primarily to identify candidates whose prospects for tenure are low? Is its goal (as the criteria for associate professor currently state) to tell us whether a colleague is tenurable "at a major research institution within three to five years"? Or, if we truly have a tenure-track system, is its goal to tell us whether someone will be tenurable at Harvard?

Promotion data and colleagues' comments make clear that the associate review is currently neither a rigorous selection mechanism nor, in many cases, adequate preparation for the candidate en route to tenure. As mentioned in the "Preamble," 97% of assistant professors in the FAS who stood for promotion at the FAS passed their associate review. And, while this varies by department, reviews often seem to occur without strenuous senior faculty engagement with the case and without frank and useful post-review feedback to the candidate on how to prepare for tenure.

Conceivably, the associate review could become a completely "no-risk" review, where it is established from the point of hire that assistant professors will pass their review. The review would instead be wholly focused on providing useful feedback to the faculty member, to help them best prepare for tenure. This approach would alleviate junior colleagues' stress, it would make explicit what is already implicitly the case (i.e., that almost everyone passes their associate review), and because providing feedback would be the primary purpose of the review, it could incentivize departments and senior faculty to actively seek out areas for improvement and to provide concrete guidance on how to prepare for tenure.

One disadvantage of a "no-risk" review is that it hinders our current ability to let underperforming tenure-track faculty go in a way that is systematic, somewhat less unpleasant than firing, and possibly providing a smoother transition to another position. However, serious underperformers are relatively rare, which may make this an acceptable disadvantage. Another downside to a "no-risk" approach is that if reviews are not conducted with extreme rigor, this "new" type of associate review will replicate the problems of the current associate review.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the associate review could become more genuinely selective, while still rigorously gathering information, identifying weaknesses and areas for improvement, and providing more concrete feedback to tenure-track faculty about how to prepare for tenure. In theory, this approach would shift some of the overall reduction of a tenure-track cohort from the pre-tenure point to the pre-associate point. It would enable faculty to know sooner whether their chances of staying at Harvard long-term are low, and they could prepare for a career elsewhere.

One downside to this approach is that faculty mature at different rates, some scholarly projects naturally take longer to come to fruition, and candidates who seem less promising at the associate review stage sometimes develop in extraordinary ways a few years later. An overly selective associate review could cull outstanding faculty – perhaps especially those doing the most novel and innovative work – too early.

A too selective review at the 4-year mark could also mean that, in practice, faculty would need to complete meaningful work by Year 2, in order to get published by Year 4, which can be challenging for many people and in many (but not all) fields; it also affects the quality of the work for which they are being evaluated. In some fields with longer peer-review processes for publication, finished work by Year 4 would privilege individuals who come to Harvard with post-docs, or first jobs elsewhere, which in turn might discourage departments from hiring freshly minted Ph.D.s.

A too selective review may also disproportionately impact women faculty and faculty of color, given that unequal distribution of service responsibilities can impact their scholarly productivity. As mentioned above in "Time to Tenure," women and faculty of color often carry extra informal as well as formal advising responsibilities for students or are asked to serve on committees to help diversify committee composition. In addition, first-generation Ph.D.s and faculty from disadvantaged backgrounds may need more time to build networks and learn the system.

A formidable associate review could also dissuade some people from accepting tenure-track offers at Harvard, discourage them from standing for review, or exacerbate the retention issue.

We endorse neither an explicitly "no-risk" review nor a review specifically geared towards increasing the selection rate at the associate stage. **We recommend making the associate review significantly more rigorous in terms of feedback, to truly help the candidate to prepare for tenure, without any advance expectation of whether this will lower or increase the selection rate.** With this focus on more robust feedback, it should be explicitly communicated to departments that faculty scholarship matures at different rates and can be impacted by other factors (such as service commitments or networking opportunities), and that departments and CAP subcommittees should guard against letting go of colleagues too early.

3. Aligning the Associate Review, Tenure Review, and 2nd-Year Review

One area of agreement among faculty is that the criteria at each stage of the tenure track – for the 2nd year review, the associate review, and the tenure review – need to be aligned, so that colleagues are being evaluated in consistent, and incremental, ways.

We strongly recommend that the associate review be treated as a thorough rehearsal for a possible tenure review. While the standards for success in the two reviews are of course different, aligning the tasks and criteria, to the extent that is reasonable and possible, will make the tenure-track system more internally coherent, will conserve and compound, rather than dissipate, effort and information from one review to the next, and will help the candidate and department to prepare more effectively for a tenure review.

While the 2nd-year review is technically beyond TTRC's charge, we recommend that the 2nd-year review, which seems to be inconsistently implemented across departments, be <u>required</u> in all departments (with accountability to the relevant divisional dean's/SEAS Dean's office), and that it be made more rigorous and more deliberately aligned with the associate review and similarly focused on feedback.

a) Forms of Alignment

Throughout this report, we will discuss ways that the three reviews – and especially the associate review and tenure review – can be brought into better alignment with each other. This includes creating throughlines on matters such as:

- <u>Defining the field:</u> Do the candidate and the department define the candidate's field clearly in the 2nd-year review and continue that process through the associate and tenure reviews?
- <u>Impact:</u> In each review, do the candidate, review committee, and department explain the candidate's impact in all the areas under assessment (research, teaching, advising, mentoring, service)?
- <u>Candidate's work</u>: Throughout the candidate's time on the tenure track, and not just in proximity to reviews, are there ways for members of the department to develop a thorough knowledge of the candidate's work?
- <u>Teaching, advising, mentoring:</u> Given that most tenure-track faculty learn over time how to be effective undergraduate and graduate teachers, advisors, and mentors, in what ways can the FAS adopt a developmental approach to their learning and to assessing their work in these roles?
- <u>Evaluative Continuity:</u> To what extent is some continuity between evaluative processes appropriate? For instance:

- External letters: Is continuity important between letter writers in the associate review and the tenure review in order to provide a fuller sense of the candidate's trajectory? And how might the system guard against entrenching earlier views of the candidate or reinforcing biases?
- Committee membership: Should departments ensure that tenure review committees include members of the associate review committee, for institutional memory concerning field definition, choice of letter writers, or feedback that was given to the candidate after the associate review?

For the sake of argument, we note that some may think that misalignments (in process, priorities, perspectives, information) across the three reviews serve some purpose. Misalignments even within a single review process (e.g., among the departmental, CAP, and ad hoc stages of the tenure review process) could be argued as having benefits, such as providing a more holistic view of the candidate. However, based on the feedback TTRC received from colleagues, and from our own deliberations, we believe it is far more productive (for both the candidate and department) for these three reviews to be more aligned.

b) Normalizing Critical Assessment

One of the most important throughlines in the three reviews may be attitudinal or perspectival.

If we truly wish to give tenure-track colleagues useful feedback in their reviews that will help them prepare for the next level of advancement, we encourage departments to normalize the idea and practice of both positive and critical assessment of candidates, not only during their associate review, but as early as the 2nd-year review. This candid feedback can only help the candidate to learn, grow, and prepare for their next review. We heard tenure-track faculty say how much they want concrete, honest feedback. A shared expectation in departments that critical feedback is a normal part of assessment may help tenured faculty to discuss areas for improvement, rather than avoid them in the name of being encouraging and supportive.

We encourage departments to adopt the stance of evaluators rather than advocates. It is tempting to fall into the role of an advocate, especially when we have spent years getting to know our tenure-track colleagues and may be invested in their advancement. Not only in our interactions with these colleagues, but in review committees' department-facing or CAP-facing moments, it can serve us well to adhere to the role of evaluator. Convinced of the candidate's merit, a review committee may present a case to the department or to CAP as a "slam-dunk," unintentionally quashing dissent or abridging discussion, and the case statement may also focus on strengths and omit or minimize any weaknesses. CAP, however, at a greater distance from the case, brings more of an evaluator's eye to the case, typically notices if thorough assessment of the candidate's weaknesses (as well as strengths) is missing, and this lack of balanced assessment may, in fact, cause CAP to question the department's ability to show unbiased judgment. Nearly all candidates have some weaknesses, and CAP expressed to the TTRC its clear preference for candid assessment of both weaknesses and strengths.

c) Communication

In general, we view the associate review and tenure review as crucial opportunities for honest and helpful feedback to be exchanged: in the associate review, between the candidate and the department, between the department and the divisional dean/SEAS Dean, and in tenure reviews, between the department, the divisional dean/SEAS Dean, and CAP.

Broadly outlined, we recommend:

- **At the outset of associate reviews and tenure reviews, a more robust line of communication between the department and the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and CAP, about best practices[12] in running successful associate reviews and tenure reviews**
- **During reviews, targeted exchanges between the candidate and review committee[13] and between the department chair, review committee, and divisional dean/SEAS Dean[14]**
- **After the associate review, more systematic feedback from the department to the candidate on strengths and areas for improvement; and from the divisional dean/CAP subcommittee to the department, highlighting weaknesses in the presentation of the case (i.e., the dossier) that should be addressed before the tenure review**
- **After tenure reviews, more feedback from CAP to the department, to help the department prepare strong cases in the future.**

4. Criteria for Associate Promotion

Currently, according to the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*, the criteria for being an associate professor are: “An associate professorship is a tenure-track appointment held by individuals who have demonstrated sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major research institution within three to five years.”

---

[12] Regarding best practices in reviews, we recommend that the division, CAP, and the FAS offer guidance to departments on topics such as:

- How to effectively define the field
- How to write a strong case statement. Including:
    - The vital importance of frank, full assessment of the candidate, and the fact that minimizing or omitting candidate weaknesses weakens the case, as it damages credibility and raises questions at CAP and in an ad hoc.
- How to help candidates write effective research statements, teaching statements, advising and mentoring statements (see also Section III.D, “Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring”), and service statements (see Section III.E, “Service”)
- How CAP and CAP subcommittees evaluate dossiers
- The vital importance of frank, full feedback to candidates, in order to adequately prepare them for the tenure review. (See Section III.B.7, “Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews”)
- In tenure reviews, how to write a useful internal letter (see Section III.C, “External Letters and Internal Letters”), the importance of frank, full feedback in these letters, and the fact that unsubstantial internal letters throw more weight onto the external letters, weakening the department’s say in the case.

[13] E.g., see Section III.B.5, “Defining the Field” and Section III.B.6, “Information About the Candidate.”

[14] E.g., see Section III.B.5, “Defining the Field.”

One of the most effective ways to strengthen associate reviews is to modify the criteria for associate promotion. We recommend changing the criteria from "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major institution within three to five years" to "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years."

In tandem with this change, we recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers include not only the associate-promotion criteria, but also Harvard's tenure criteria.

We also recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers ask whether the candidate should be tenured *now* at Harvard.

While seemingly modest, our proposed change to the associate promotion criteria ("to qualify for tenure *at Harvard* within three to five years") redirects internal and external evaluators' attention to the trajectory that Harvard is interested in, given that we have a tenure-track system, and as a result, can generate more useful information for the department and the candidate. Moreover, this change will more closely align the criteria for associate review and tenure review.

Providing Harvard's tenure criteria[15] in the letter to external letter writers frames the request more precisely, gives them a standard to respond to, and can elicit more useful feedback. (We agree with our colleague in Section III.B.1.b ["Associate Tenure") that the discrepancy between Harvard tenuring at full and other schools tenuring at associate and full can be confusing for evaluative purposes. **We recommend that this difference between Harvard tenuring at full and other schools tenuring at associate and full be made more clear in the template used for writing to external letter-writers.**)

Asking whether the candidate should be tenured at Harvard "now" provides a mechanism for identifying truly exceptional people, who may be tenurable early. This recommendation also helps to address the poaching issue (where we might lose outstanding people to institutions that tenure at the associate professor [or full] rank), by alerting the administration to the candidate's stature and possibly allowing them to move more quickly than usual, if needed.

As a caveat: This question ("Should this person be tenured now at Harvard?") should be framed carefully in the template used to write to external letter-writers, as faculty scholarship matures at different rates, and we do not want to invite and then entrench colleagues' views of someone prematurely. We also do not want to provide feedback to candidates after the associate review that might have the unintended

[15]Beyond the scope of TTRC's review, we invite colleagues to consider a larger question: Who is it that the FAS aims to tenure? Our current tenure criteria state, "Tenured professorial appointments are reserved for scholars of the first order of eminence who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and research and who have the capacity to make significant and lasting contributions to the department(s) proposing the appointment. The foremost criteria for appointment are: scholarly achievement and impact on the field, evidence of intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, potential for future accomplishments, teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students, and the individual's potential contributions to the University and broader scholarly communities." In keeping with our charge, we engaged with this standard in making our recommendations, but we discussed whether this, or some variant of this, should be faculty members' shared mission. We invite our colleagues to continue to consider this issue.

effect of causing them to feel they should leave Harvard. In most cases, we should expect the answers from letter-writers to be "No, they're not ready to be tenured yet," simply because not enough information is likely available yet to make a tenure determination. At the same time, if letters come back with a positive response to this question, this should not lead to automatic requests for accelerated tenure, nor does it guarantee that the candidate will receive tenure. While external evaluators' views are important, they are one of many pieces of the puzzle; and scholarship aside (which external letter-writers focus on), the candidate's teaching, advising, mentoring, and service may not yet be fully developed. Indeed, external letter writers do not have full knowledge of (and often do not comment on) the non-scholarly aspects of a candidate's performance. Thus, in either scenario – whether letter-writers answer "yes" or "no" – the department must interpret the feedback thoughtfully and also take care in the feedback they give to the candidate.

Unlike some colleagues, TTRC is less concerned that, in the absence of associate tenure, Harvard faculty will lose incentive to stay engaged after they earn tenure. Harvard's high tenure bar and focus on a candidate's trajectory increase the likelihood that colleagues who earn tenure are likely to stay motivated and productive.

Note: Some TTRC members expressed reservations about the recommendations above – in particular, that a) the discrepancy between Harvard tenuring at full professor while other schools tenure at associate does indeed necessitate careful explanation of this difference to letter writers, b) letter writers may have preconceived (and incorrect) notions about the bar for tenure at Harvard (as opposed to "a major research institution"), and c) tenureability "at Harvard" may trigger for letter writers inaccurate stereotypes about the institution.

Please see Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters") below, for additional recommendations concerning external letters.

5. Defining the Field

In addition to changing the associate promotion criteria, a second way to strengthen associate reviews is to provide significantly more support to candidates and departments in defining the candidate's field and in developing widespread understanding of the field.

While this may seem like an overly technical recommendation, it addresses one of the major challenges of associate reviews and tenure reviews. Field definition has repercussions throughout a promotion review. It affects how external letter writers, comparands, and ad hoc committee members are chosen; how external letter writers frame their assessments (and how those assessments subsequently influence the views of the review committee, department, CAP, and the ad hoc committee); how the department writes the case statement; and how the candidate's entire dossier is evaluated. When fields are defined too narrowly – focusing only on the candidate's subfield, rather than with a view to the candidate's impact on the field and adjacent fields – departments can be surprised later when the ad hoc committee seeks broader information and a case ultimately fails. Because of the importance of the field definition, departments and candidates must work to define the field well not only at the associate review stage, but as early as the 2^{nd}-year review and even the hiring stage.

a) The Venn Diagram

Currently, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* urges broad description of the field. For instance, in associate reviews and tenure reviews, the letter to external letter writers should include "A broad description of the candidate's field. Care should be taken to define the field with sufficient breadth that the candidate's contributions can be understood within an appropriately broad context. The field should not be defined as a narrow subfield specific to the candidate's interests."[16] The list of external letter-writers "should reflect an appropriately broad definition of the field." In tenure reviews, "the comparison list should reflect an appropriately broad definition of the field."

In their discussions with TTRC, Judith Singer, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and Provost Alan Garber described some of the institutional reasoning behind having a broadly defined field.

As Provost Garber said, "When you look at the FAS or University's strategy broadly, we can't cover every narrow subfield [given the finite number of faculty]. So if you're going to tenure someone in a very narrowly defined field, you want to know if it will have spill-over impact. So someone who does history on late 18^{th}-century France, would their work be cited by people in sociology who work on revolutions? Would it be cited by people who work on other countries, other periods of history? We're interested in impact. The problem with defining the field too narrowly is high impact in a narrow field does not [necessarily] mean high impact overall. Many judgments are involved in this, because a narrow field may be a very important field in the future, and we don't want to lose opportunities to tenure people who may be in [an important] field…. But even to judge that, you need something to indicate the impact will be broader. That's the question at the heart of field definition: when is it broad enough that saying the person is top in their field will have broad impact? The majority of FAS faculty meet that criteria of broader impact."

Given this institutional perspective, it is in candidates' and departments' interest to define the field not only in terms of the candidate's narrow subfield, but also with conscious attention to how the candidate's work relates to, and has an impact in, the field more broadly and adjacent fields.

Senior Vice Provost Singer described a "Venn diagram" concept for defining a candidate's field, with the candidate in the center of the overlapping rings, and a clear indication of the adjacent subfields and fields in which the candidate's work has impact. A department's case statement would not only

[16] For the *Handbook* quotes in this paragraph, please see See Step 7a in Section 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position" and Step 7 in Section 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor."

elucidate this impact but would also explain how the choice of external letter-writers and comparands relates to this Venn diagram.[17]

Provost Garber said, "I view the associate review as utterly crucial. That's when a question like this can be addressed…Is this [work] having impact? 'You're doing well in the narrow field, but think about the broader impact. That's something Harvard cares about.' In the associate review, that needs to be taken much more seriously, and feedback during the associate review is crucial. Feedback after the ad hoc is when the cow has already left the barn. But the associate review is key." Senior Vice Provost Singer added that it helps to think about this field definition in the 2nd-year review of tenure-track faculty as well. That can get the candidate started in thinking about how to approach and explain their work.[18]

Faculty talked with TTRC about challenges they faced in defining the field and in promoting broader understanding of their field. We discuss these challenges in Sections 5b through 5d below and then propose some remedies in Section 5e.

b) Chair Variance

Several faculty observed that so much in a promotion review – not only how the field is defined and communicated – depends on who chairs the candidate's review committee (and to some extent, who the committee members are as well). How well does the committee chair understand the review process, and how adept are they at executing its parts? How well do they understand and/or support the candidate's work? How invested or eloquent are they in explaining the candidate's contributions? These and other factors are variable and can create inequities across cases.

The chair-variance problem can be especially felt in smaller departments, where the pool of colleagues is smaller to begin with, further limited by those who may understand a candidate's work and who can knowledgeably define the field, choose letter writers (and, in tenure reviews, comparands), and otherwise shepherd a case to completion (to say nothing of instances when that person may be on leave in the year that a candidate comes up for review).

TTRC discussed ways to mitigate the effects of "chair variance," to create greater equity across cases. One way is to provide additional opportunities for the candidate themselves to explain, contextualize, and advocate for their accomplishments. When it comes to field definition, we propose this and other solutions in Section III.B.5.e ("Support in Defining the Field") below. Please also see Section III.B.6.b ("More Systematic Gathering of Information About the Candidate") below.

c) Small Fields, Interdisciplinarity, and a Game of Telephone

---

[17] TTRC is mindful that "broad impact" can have different meanings in different fields and may not always conform to the Venn-diagram model described here.

[18] Thinking about field definition as early as the 2nd-year review also helps the candidate and the department to become aware of any orthodoxies or biases related to the work the candidate is doing and to understand the degree to which the candidate's work may be unsettling entrenched narratives and challenging the gatekeepers of their field.

Regardless of department size, candidates can face challenges in explaining to their colleagues their field, its importance, and their contributions to that field. It is those colleagues who are then responsible for sharing that information in the form of the dossier, discussion with CAP, and in many cases, discussion with the ad hoc committee. This challenge may especially impact tenure-track faculty working in small, emerging, and/or interdisciplinary fields.

As one tenure-track faculty member said, **"**In small fields in particular, you have to teach your chair what your field is….And you're trying to present your field in such a way that the chair will choose the right people to represent your field in the letters. I can't control who those letter writers are, and it's part of the anonymity of the tenure process that is deeply anxiety-provoking. And to know that on top of whatever the committee chair and department chair understand of your field, that has to be passed on in a telephone game through three more levels of judgment, in which one's field may be distorted or misunderstood along the way – especially in small fields, this is a problem. I imagine it's the same in bigger fields where there are different approaches to the field."

The "game of telephone" can skew colleagues' understanding of the field. As another tenure-track colleague put it: "These constant moments of translation and reiteration can be muddying about the signals received."

Beyond explaining their field to colleagues, interdisciplinary scholars also sometimes need to explain other aspects of their work: **"**I work in a really interdisciplinary field with multiple publishing models…. So not knowing who'll review me or be on an ad hoc committee really concerns me, because they might not understand the publishing model….I'm afraid people won't understand my subfield and my contribution."

Regrettably, a few tenure-track colleagues feel they need to suppress or defer their interdisciplinary work, because it is too hard to ensure that that work will be correctly understood, assessed, and valued in their promotion reviews. Emerging fields may also have fewer scholars who can assess the work, and intellectual or interpersonal differences among scholars in the field can be more consequential for the candidate, given the limited pool of possible evaluators. One tenure-track faculty member in an emerging, interdisciplinary field has felt compelled to defer that work until after their promotion review: "I've decided to leave that field as my second project. It's been a struggle in terms of framing my first project and how much it should be interdisciplinary, because the more interdisciplinary it is, the more difficult it will be to assess me in the tenure process. So I've been pulling back to be more solidly [in a well-established subfield]."

The feedback that the candidate receives after their associate review can reflect the department's insufficient understanding of the field, again putting a special onus on the candidate for their next review: "Advice that seemed to come at the department level, and not necessarily ventriloquizing the external letters, reveals a lack of knowledge of my subfield. So it was recommending things that didn't make sense to me, in terms of the different topics and the breadth I needed to expand out to. It made me aware that I need to, in my own statement, do a lot more of that, in terms of defining what I do and making the case myself for what it encompasses."

One tenured faculty member noted the inherent difficulty in defining emerging and/or interdisciplinary fields: "I think it is sometimes difficult to effectively define fields as disciplines emerge, sub-divide, and become interdisciplinary with seemingly ever-greater speed. My perspective is that defining the discipline is sometimes a useful exercise for the department but sometimes more of a creative effort about trying to define a meaningful cohort where one doesn't really exist. Perhaps this could be directly acknowledged and, when appropriate, simply state that some candidates are not in traditional or well-defined fields."

d) Unicorns

Small or large, interdisciplinary or not, one colleague mused that the field-definition problem may be inevitable, given that Harvard often hires pathbreakers or "unicorns," who, by definition, are not working in already understood fields. "Only one person could adequately describe the significance of my work. They couldn't speak on my behalf. Having gone through the process and mentored others and participated on committees and the ad hoc, the significance of mentoring in framing the work at every level of the process, including to the President, is really important. A lot of the mistakes that will be made will be because [colleagues] don't understand the work or its significance. You have to put phrases in their mouth and have them commit to repeat it – in the project statement, talking to your colleagues, that has to be foregrounded, to mitigate some of the random element.…On one hand, you have universities where you achieve a certain level and expect to be promoted. And there's Harvard's model where you're both 'leading the field' and 'exceeding the field.' You're more than the field. The whole process is set up to identify those people, from the comparands to the ad hoc. But [we need] a little more guidance at every level, about the 'unicorn' model that we're operating with, if that's really what it is."

e) Support in Defining the Field

Given the issues described above, how can we better support candidates and departments in effectively defining the field? We suggest five measures below.

<u>1/</u> First, we recommend greater engagement between the review committee chair, department chair, and divisional dean/SEAS Dean in formulating and reviewing the definition of the candidate's field (and also in developing and reviewing the list of external letter writers and, for tenure cases, the comparand list).

- This engagement can occur first with the department chair working with the departmental review committee to review the committee's field definition (and the list of external letter writers and, as appropriate, comparands). The divisional dean/SEAS Dean and the review committee could next discuss the field definition, before sending requests to external letter writers. The divisional dean/SEAS Dean already review the field, letter-writer list, and comparands as a part of the associate review and tenure review process; we are urging a more robust and mutual engagement between the department and the deans.

- This work can prevent field definitions that are too narrow or too from traveling up the chain; and it allows the rationale for narrow or broad definitions to be clearly understood from the outset (and conveyed up the chain). The involvement of the department chair and divisional dean/SEAS Dean can also help to reduce the effects of "chair variance" across cases.
- As part of their work, the department chair and the divisional dean/SEAS Dean should ensure that departments explain how their field definition represents the "Venn diagram" of not just the candidate's expertise in a narrow subfield, but also their impact on the field more broadly and on adjacent fields.

2/ Second, to help ensure accuracy in defining the field, to support the candidate's own learning curve in explaining their field, and to promote broader understanding of the field, we recommend building structured opportunities into review processes for candidates to provide input on their field.

- **We recommend that candidates be required to address in their research statement how they define their field and what they see as their impact in their subfield, field, and adjacent fields.**
    - We encourage departments to mentor tenure-track faculty on how to articulate the ways in which their work creates or alters a broader disciplinary ecosystem. Departments should also mentor faculty on how to reach out to colleagues in adjacent fields.
    - The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* should make clear that, just as candidates can suggest possible letter-writers for the review committee's consideration, similarly, the committee will consider (but not necessarily accept wholesale) the candidate's field definition, given the committee's own work (including with the department chair and divisional dean/SEAS Dean, as described in Section III.5.e.1 above) in defining the field.
- **We recommend that departments develop structured ways for candidates to regularly present their work to the department**. **We also recommend that the FAS continue to develop opportunities for candidates to present their work beyond their department – both across Harvard and at other institutions.**

The measures described above would give departmental faculty and others a more informed sense of the candidate's work, their field, and their impact. They would also help to offset the effects of "chair variance" and the "game of telephone," where candidates must rely on a few individuals to represent their work to others. Instead, candidates will have opportunities themselves to discuss their field and their impact.

A recently tenured colleague recalled the experience of a tenure-track faculty member at another school. "Every year she had to present a talk to her faculty colleagues. That got the colleagues understanding what she's doing. Not just when she came in, but over the course of 7 or 8 years….And she hated it at the time, but in retrospect, she said it was a really wonderful thing, because everyone in the department was on the same page….You might get really interesting advice, too, which could be helpful."

Several faculty said that talking about their field was both an important art and a learned one, and practice doing this could be more systematically built into the tenure-track process.

One recently tenured faculty member recalled giving a rambling introduction of themself at an event for tenure-track faculty when they first came to Harvard. Others in the room gave a “beautiful narrative of their career.” “I didn’t know how to talk like that. I spent the next six years learning how to do that. If someone had told me early on, systematically, you have to learn how to do this if you want someone to advocate for you, [that would have helped].”

Another recently tenured colleague described their learning curve in talking about their field: “I felt as though every occasion where I was not speaking to my department but was addressing and communicating with members of the academic community…beyond my department was extremely valuable. In some sense, it was psychologically traumatizing, because I would say, this is why my work is so great, and they’re like, who cares about that? So each time, you learn, what is the level at which people actually care….When I started, I had a very narrow…idea of my field. And I definitely knew I was doing innovative work in my subfield, and in my subspecialty…. But it very quickly became clear that not only did no one care about that subspeciality, no one cared about [the subfield]. So then my whole subfield is out the window. And then I have to say, why am I changing the field, full stop?”

Another colleague said, “Having opportunities to talk about your work early on, outside your department – that was pretty helpful for me. I got asked really early on, probably in my first or second year, to talk about my work at one of the Standing Committee on Women panels for junior faculty….That’s been a great way to learn about what other faculty are doing, and more opportunities like that would be wonderful for all faculty.”

3/ Third, we recommend that the candidate and department’s work of defining the field ideally start in the 2nd-year review, and certainly in preparation for the associate review and the tenure review. This would enable the candidate and the department to become well-versed in the candidate’s work and field over time, and for that understanding to inform their respective tasks in promotion reviews. This is one important way that the associate review, at the very least, can be treated as a rehearsal for the tenure review.

One recently tenured colleague said, “The 2nd-year review is a good place [to start to learn to talk about your field]. You learn to talk to your colleagues in your department. By the associate review, you should have the tools to be talking to the dean. Those [research and teaching] statements and letters should be dean-friendly, in terms of their definitions of and understanding of impact.”

Another recently tenured colleague said, “For my associate promotion, my department took it really seriously. My faculty mentor spent a lot of time with me, where I was given the opportunity to really think about, how do I explain my research program? What is my program? What is my field? How do I describe my work? It was hard, but it made the [research] part of the next promotion much easier….At the associate stage…I was trying to think that through for myself, and also my mentor did a great job of getting me to tell him and explain to him, so he could explain to others. I felt he told me, we’re going to do this like it's your full promotion review – really take this seriously. I thought that worked really well for me."

4/ Fourth, to continue, rather than begin again from scratch, a department's learning curve about a candidate's field, we recommend that procedures be worked out to allow appropriate information about a candidate's field-definition to be shared from the associate review to the tenure review (and, as appropriate, from the 2nd-year review to the associate review). This is not meant to ossify in later reviews earlier conceptions of how the candidate and department viewed the field, as those conceptions may naturally evolve. Rather, the intent is to make use of information. As associate review committees or tenure review committees do their work of defining the field, they will be utilizing, as appropriate, not only information on the field-definition from the associate or 2nd-year review, but also information from the candidate's new research statement and presentations of their work, and consultations with the department chair and divisional dean/SEAS Dean, as described in 1/ and 2/ above.

5/ Fifth, to further acknowledge the special challenges of scholars working in smaller, emerging, and/or interdisciplinary fields – or more broadly, in any cases where the department lacks a faculty member with expertise in the candidate's field – we recommend two additional measures:

- **That departments identify such cases as early as possible in the tenure track (and certainly before the associate review), so that the department can put in place ways to support the candidate, and**
- **If there is a faculty member from a neighboring FAS department or another Harvard School who is expert in the candidate's field, we recommend that they be brought on in a mentoring capacity to the tenure-track faculty member, well before the associate review, and we recommend specifying in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* that they should be asked to serve on any eventual ad hoc committee**.

6. Information About the Candidate

In addition to changing the associate promotion criteria and working on defining the field, a third way to strengthen reviews is to bring into the review process more of the information about the candidate (and more systematically gathered information) that departments and others actually need to make promotion decisions.

a) Fuller Information About the Candidate

A mantra during TTRC's deliberations was, "Do what you need to do, to get the information that you need." This was a reminder to ourselves to think critically about what information people need to make informed promotion decisions, and to then figure out how to make that information available.

As discussed in Section III.B.4 ("Criteria for Associate Promotion"), changing the criteria and how we frame our requests to external letter-writers is one way to more pointedly get the information that we need. As discussed in Section III.B.5.e ("Support in Defining the Field"), getting the candidate's input on their field is another way to get some of the information that we need. In Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters"), Section III.D ("Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring"), and Section III.E ("Service") below, we suggest other ways to bring into reviews useful information for making promotion decisions. At this point in the discussion, however, we also note the following.

- **<u>Feedback from previous reviews:</u> We recommend that the official feedback letter that the candidate received from their 2nd-year review or associate review be shared in an appropriate form with the, respectively, departmental associate review committee or departmental tenure committee, to provide some context for understanding how the candidate has developed in the past few years.**
- **<u>Input from the candidate:</u> We recommend that there be opportunities for the review committee, upon preliminary review of the candidate's materials, to seek clarification from the candidate, if needed, so that the candidate can directly answer any questions and prevent any confusion. We recommend that any such interchange occur during a defined, early period of the review process, and that the window then close for further communication between the candidate and review committee, to protect the confidentiality of the department's review process**.
- **<u>Internal letters:</u> We recommend that internal letters by departmental faculty do not become part of the associate review process, but we support other ways for departments to get senior faculty to engage strenuously with this review.** As it is already difficult to obtain internal letters in tenure reviews, requiring them in associate reviews would be onerous for faculty. Moreover, restricting internal letters to tenure reviews encourages senior faculty to take a fresh view during the tenure evaluation, rather than being tempted to rely on their previous judgments.
- Please see Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters").
- Please see Section III.D ("Teaching, Advising, Mentoring").
- Please see Section III.E ("Service").

b) More Systematic Gathering of Information About the Candidate

As discussed throughout this report, many elements can cause variability in promotion cases. **We recommend more systematic methods of collecting information about the candidate, to reduce bias, create more consistency across cases, and to generate more useful feedback for the department and, after the review, the candidate.**

Standardizing to a greater extent what information is collected, and how it is collected, may seem purely bureaucratic, but it is a powerful tool for reducing bias and for improving the quality of information that is used in promotion reviews: e.g., external letters; feedback solicited from students, advisees, and mentees; the confidential internal letters that tenured faculty write to the FAS Dean in tenure reviews; and the statements written by candidates themselves about their research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service. This standardizing can be achieved through multiple means: by providing guidance in person, in group trainings, in explanatory materials, and through more carefully thought-out forms or templates.

We discuss this standardizing in more detail at relevant points in this report. For example, in Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters"), we discuss ways to collect more useful and consistent information in external and internal letters. In Section III.D ("Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring"), we discuss ways to gather more consistent information about a candidate's teaching, advising, and mentoring, including a more effective form for gathering student/advisee/mentee feedback on a candidate. Please see those and other sections for more information.

7. Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews

Department chairs, tenured faculty, and tenure-track faculty have widely reported to us that the feedback candidates receive after their associate reviews is not sufficiently frank or critical – in many cases it was unhelpful. As a result, candidates can be blindsided by issues at the tenure review stage that might have been addressed, or addressed more forthrightly, at the associate review stage. As one faculty member said, **"**When [the associate review] works well, it works well if we give really concrete feedback about what needs to change. When it doesn't go well, it's when we give bland feedback and then the outcome isn't good. More concrete feedback would be better."

Detailed, critical feedback – on research, teaching, advising, and mentoring, and service – not only helps candidates understand the standard that they should aspire to, it also gives candidates information necessary to decide whether to stay at Harvard or to pursue their career elsewhere.

As important as honest feedback after reviews is the mentoring of candidates before reviews – starting early and continuing throughout the tenure track, not just in proximity to reviews. Below we discuss feedback after reviews and mentoring along the tenure track.

<u>a) Feedback After the Associate Review</u>

Candidates typically receive positive (and cursory) feedback after the associate review. TTRC examined a selection of redacted, fully anonymized departmental letters to candidates following their associate review (for all divisions/SEAS), as well as redacted, fully anonymized departmental letters to candidates following their 2nd-year-review (for all divisions/SEAS). We also asked tenure-track and recently tenured faculty about the feedback they received.

Several faculty members stated that the feedback they received was "useless," because there was no concrete, actionable advice about how to strengthen their case before the tenure review. Vagueness was another common descriptor: "The feedback I got was generally very positive but kind of vague. 'Keep doing what you're doing, things are good, people think well of you.'"

Other colleagues receive mixed messages, both in person ("I've had wildly conflicting advice from different mentors") and within the associate review letter: "The letter is a complex genre because it's ventriloquizing so many people."

Several colleagues said that quotes from external letter writers were specific and helpful: “In my letter for the associate review, the voices of the department felt muddled, like a Greek chorus, but the quotes from the [external] letters were really helpful. Those were actionable items. Some were contradictory, but there was a little more transparency. It was great to hear as much feedback from the letters as possible.”

Some colleagues didn’t know how to interpret the feedback in their review letter, as they weren’t clear what the scope of the review was and what was or wasn’t within the letter-writers’ remit. This cut both ways, whether the feedback was positive or negative:

On one hand: “I still don’t know what the review committee was charged with, in terms of what things they could comment on….I read through my letter, it was very complimentary… Keep on keeping on, great work. Which was lovely to get. But the fact is, they didn’t comment on weaknesses, here’s what you can work on for the next review. Is that out of their purview, not part of their charge? Or should I take it as, implicitly, everything is wonderful?” Conversely: **“**It would have been nice if he had let me know if the research is on the right track; or there were things letter writers said I was doing *well* in certain areas – sometimes you don’t know, and it’s really helpful to know that. You can expand on your strengths: 'This is how I can potentially establish myself, because letter writers think this area is very unique.’”

This issue pertains to 2nd-year reviews as well. “One thing I find missing in the 2nd-year review was specific advice about my research and my strategizing on that topic. That’s fine, I assumed they didn’t want to involve themselves in that. But it’d be nice if they said somewhere explicitly what the scope of the 2nd-year review is. So that I’d know if they didn’t want to talk about it or not.”

One colleague suggested that there may be an inherent difficulty in giving tenure-track faculty feedback on their research: “[W]e’re all independent scientists, the labs work on different things. So it’s very easy to tell you what you should do in a journal paper-submission process, like maybe you can contact the editor, those specifics are helpful. But beyond that, whether you’re on the right track scientifically is almost something no one can tell you, though they can share what their view could be. There are multiple reasons for this. They don’t truly know, and you don’t know what you’ll find interesting and exciting. And before it happens, you won’t know why it’s interesting and exciting….I’m not sure you can do that for junior faculty for research, helping them analyze whether they’re on the right track to doing something interesting and important.”

The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* provides guidance on what the associate-review letter should contain.[19] In addition, templates for the letter are available to the divisional/SEAS offices. These measures alone do not seem to ensure rigorous feedback.

[19] Step 12 in Section 5.B.2, “Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor,” in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* states: “The letter for the candidate should state whether the faculty member has been promoted, indicating whether the faculty member has met the criteria for associate promotion. In the case of promotion, the letter should provide constructive feedback and impart useful insights and suggestions from the departmental discussion and external letters (anonymously quoting passages of the letters as

In addition, there is a slight disconnect between who may be giving feedback at the associate review stage and who does so in the tenure review. Feedback to the candidate at the first stage may primarily come from the review committee, including faculty who may be in the candidate's field and are close to the candidate. When senior departmental faculty engage more fully in the tenure review, it is too late for the candidate to hear critical feedback and to change course and improve. For those candidates whose tenure prospects are low, they have lost time and the opportunity to leave Harvard on their own terms and seek positions elsewhere. This speaks to the importance of greater senior faculty engagement with the associate review, as we have discussed throughout Section III.B ("Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews").

One colleague said that some of the most valuable feedback they received after their associate review had to do with "impact" more broadly: **"**[After my associate review] I talked to the committee chair and the department chair. It ended up not being advice on how to get tenure here, it was more about how to make an impact on the field more generally. So even if tenure was fully off the table, there were these really instructive conversations on, what is the perspective on you from the outside, what is it people see as your major contributions, here's what people are excited about, here's what you're known for. There wasn't any, 'if this, then tenure here.'"

Given the importance of frank, full feedback to candidates after the associate review, we recommend the following:

- **We recommend that structures and incentives be developed for departments and candidates to search <u>actively</u> for areas for improvement during associate reviews, engage directly with those weaknesses over the course of the review process, and develop customized mentoring to help address these issues.** Importantly, feedback from the associate review should include both strengths and weaknesses not only about research, but also teaching, mentoring, advising and service (see below).

- **To improve the quality of feedback candidates receive after their associate review, we recommend that a stronger template for the associate review letter be created and used across the FAS. This can generate more useful feedback for the candidate and help to standardize a level of quality in the feedback across the departments and divisions/SEAS.**

---

appropriate). Furthermore, the letter should provide an indication of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses with regard to the individual's potential for eventual tenure within the FAS. The letter should offer advice regarding research, teaching and advising, citizenship, and continuing professional development, including a reminder of mentoring arrangements that have been established within the department for the candidate. In addition, in setting forth the dates of the candidate's term as an associate professor, the letter should note that if the candidate undergoes a review for promotion to tenure at an earlier time than in the ordinary timetable for tenure reviews, and if that early review is unsuccessful, the candidate's tenure-track appointment will end one year after the review occurred, superseding the original end-date of the tenure-track appointment."

  - The template should direct the letter-writer(s) to include concrete, actionable items in each of the following areas: research; teaching, advising, mentoring; and service.
  - In particular, feedback on teaching, advising, and mentoring at the associate review stage can be critical, as these are activities where nearly all tenure-track faculty have a learning curve.
  - The letter-writer should speak to how the candidate can increase their impact in each of the areas in which they are assessed. This can be useful regardless of whether or not the candidate ultimately proceeds to the tenure review and/or gains tenure at Harvard.

- **We recommend that, in addition to the official letter from the divisional dean to the candidate after their associate review, an in-person meeting between the candidate and the review committee be required, where the candidate can receive not only feedback, but also "feed-forward": i.e., specific advice for developing their research (and its impact), teaching/advising/mentoring, service, statements for their dossier, and any other aspects of their work for the tenure stage.** We recommend these conversations include at least the department chair as well as the review committee chair, so that multiple perspectives, interpretations, and recommendations can be shared with the candidate. For both written and in-person feedback, we emphasize the importance of detailed, specific, honest feedback.

b) Mentoring

Beyond any deficiencies in the review letter, colleagues spoke more broadly about disparities in the mentoring of tenure-track faculty. Mentoring is another source of valuable feedback to the candidate, both in preparation for, and after, a promotion review.

As one tenured faculty member said: "Some TT colleagues seem instantly embraced by their colleagues, sometimes for excellent reason, and sometimes despite clear weaknesses in the case….But other TT colleagues do not….The divisional deans cannot of course force departments to 'like' a colleague, but they hopefully could make even clearer, with support from the Dean of FAS, expectations for departments and hold departments accountable. They could also be even more on the lookout for cases where departments are treating colleagues differently based on gender, race, or other protected category." Although all FAS departments were asked to develop mentoring plans several years ago, not all have done so, and some plans were developed but are not regularly or systematically implemented.

Informal mentoring – whether advice on preparing for promotion reviews, developing action plans afterwards, or opportunities to give talks, or nominations for awards, or advice on grants – can be unequally distributed among tenure-track faculty. As Dean Ohen notes, "Increased efforts to hire women and racially minoritized faculty don't lead to growth and overall representation unless attention is also paid to their merit. What are the more nuanced, informal phases in the journey to tenure that need to be embedded that aren't in the review process?" As previously noted in this report, Dean Ohen said that gaining social and political capital is "a learned thing. If you can tap into networks, you'll know [things], but if you don't, you're not included in the circles that transfer that informal information…. [Faculty] need to get connected to those informal networks."

One recently tenured faculty member noted the importance of having clearly identified people, not necessarily in the department, who tenure-track faculty can talk to confidentially: "If you feel something is not going well, and you have no idea who to talk to, because you're afraid to share your concerns with your department, who do you go to, to talk to?... In retrospect, I wish I could have talked to someone about [a problem] earlier, but there was no clear pathway for voicing any concerns in a confidential way. I felt with members of my department that you're constantly being scrutinized, and there's this complicated politics in the background that you don't quite understand."

For some faculty, mentoring is helpful even at the nuts-and-bolts level of what the timeline is for promotion reviews, what key deadlines are, and how to prepare materials.

TTRC endorses the approach of mentoring early and throughout the tenure-track process, not just at review points. As Dean Ohen said, "It's an opportunity, when you have a new cohort of faculty, to help to set standards at that early stage, when they're not yet entrenched in their department's culture. For example, think about inclusive pedagogy….Or if they're the only woman or person of color, talk about service obligations up front."

Dean Ohen said that faculty affinity groups can help faculty to thrive. More broadly, Dean Ohen said, "Set the conditions for people to thrive…in different settings and in different years, not just once a year. And do it at different levels – the department, the FAS, etc. Keep setting those conditions for people to make informal connections."

We recommend the continuation and/or revival of departmental mentoring programs for tenure-track faculty, required across the FAS. We support an approach of mentoring early and throughout the tenure-track process, not just at review points. An active role by divisional deans/SEAS Dean can both help in the design and, importantly, the implementation of mentoring plans.

We recommend the creation of materials at the departmental, divisional/SEAS, and/or FAS level that can help to structure and support departmental mentoring in a consistent way, as appropriate. For example, a clear and robust timeline with key milestones, tasks, and deadlines on the tenure track could be utilized and modified as necessary across departments. This document can help senior faculty mentors and tenure-track mentees to keep track of impending dossier deadlines. It could include a checklist for the second-year, associate, and tenure reviews, and a place to keep track of one-on-one mentoring meetings during the semester. This could alleviate the burden borne by department administrators and the department chair, while helping to clarify processes for the candidate as well.

To create more consistent mentoring efforts across departments, we recommend that a brief description of the department's mentoring approach to the candidate be included in the case statement for associate reviews and tenure reviews.

Please see Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters") for a recommendation that internal letter-writers be asked to comment on the department's mentoring of the candidate and the internal letter-writer's own role (if any) in mentoring the candidate.

We recommend the development of a formal mentoring system for women and minority faculty, pairing tenure-track faculty with respected faculty members outside the department. Tenure-track faculty should have a voice in deciding who their mentor will be.

We recommend a series of divisional/SEAS and/or FAS trainings for all tenure-track faculty to help them prepare for their associate review and tenure review. This includes training on topics such as:

- How to effectively define one's field and how to connect with colleagues in adjacent subfields and fields.
- How to write an effective research statement, teaching statement, advising and mentoring statement (see Section III.D, "Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring"), and service statement (see Section III.E, "Service"), including how to explain one's impact in each of these areas.
- Understanding the scope of the associate review, so that candidates know what is within or beyond the departmental remit and how, consequently, to interpret the feedback that is in their associate-review letter.

C. External Letters and Internal Letters

In this section, we look more closely at both external letters in associate reviews and tenure reviews and the confidential internal letters that tenured faculty write to the FAS Dean in tenure cases. Both types of letters drew heated, voluminous, and often contradictory comments from faculty in our outreach efforts. In our recommendations below, we attempt to accomplish several goals:

For external letters:

- Reduce the workload, and thereby increase response rates, for departments and for external letter-writers.
- Tailor the process to more effectively gather information needed to make informed decisions about a candidate and her/his/their dossier.
- Take into account special challenges when candidates work in small, emerging, and/or interdisciplinary fields.
- Reduce bias.
- Better align the external evaluation process between the associate review and tenure review.

For internal letters:

- Acknowledge broader cultural issues that internal letters perpetuate rather than address.
- Tailor the process to more effectively yield information that CAP, the FAS Dean, ad hoc members, and the President need to make informed decisions about the candidate.
- Increase genuine engagement of senior faculty in the informed evaluation of their tenure-track colleagues.
- Reduce bias.

Throughout TTRC's deliberations, we adopted the guiding principle of, "how can we best gather the information we need?" FAS processes can be, on one hand, unduly onerous and restrictive (for external letters) and, on the other hand, devoid of any guidance (for internal letters) – and in both cases, without necessarily generating the specific information that departments and others most need to make more informed assessments of candidates.

Below, we first discuss the main issues and challenges identified for external letters and then turn to internal letters.

1. External Letters

a) Current Requirements

Currently, in associate reviews, the department submits for divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval a draft of the solicitation letter to potential external letter writers and a recipient list "sufficient to elicit three to five responses for inclusion in the final dossier."[20]

In tenure reviews, the department submits for divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval a draft of the solicitation letter, a recipient list "sufficient to elicit 12 to 15 responses for inclusion in the final dossier,"[21] and a list of "four to five" comparands to whom the letter writers will compare the candidate.

As the details of these requirements are relevant to our discussion of letters, we provide these details from the *Handbook* below.

<u>Associate Reviews:</u>

"The recipient list:

- The recipient list should include tenured scholars who represent a range of views from a variety of peer institutions. The recipient list should reflect an appropriately broad definition of the field.
- It is expected that the list will be diverse, including gender and racial/ethnic diversity.
- The list (see Sample Table) should be in alphabetical order and include title/current rank, home institution, year of doctorate (if available), a link to the scholar's website, email address, whether the scholar has been the candidate's Ph.D. advisor, postdoctoral advisor, or co-author, and the rationale for including each scholar on the list."

<u>Tenure Reviews:</u>

"*The comparison list:*

- The comparison list includes four to five scholars in the candidate's field who span a range of experiences from the strongest recently tenured scholars to full professors who are well-established leaders in the field; in some instances, it may be appropriate to include highly accomplished senior researchers, curators, artists, or others. The list must include at least two

[20] Please see Chapter 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor," for more information.
[21] Please see Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," for more information.

full professors and must have gender diversity. In addition to representing a range of career experience, the comparison list should reflect an appropriately broad definition of the field.

- The comparands listed are not candidates for the position and are listed solely as benchmarks for the candidate undergoing review.
- The most useful comparison list consists of scholars who themselves meet the standards for tenure within the FAS. (However, no Harvard faculty – excluding the candidate – should be included on the comparison list.)
- It is expected that the list will be diverse, including gender and racial/ethnic diversity.
- The list should be in alphabetical order and include title/current rank, home institution, year of doctorate and institution, and a link to the scholars' websites.

The recipient list (see the Sample Table in this handbook):

- The recipient list should include active scholars who are ordinarily full professors within the field (or fields, in interdisciplinary cases). The recipient list should reflect an appropriately broad definition of the field.
- It is expected that the list will be diverse, including gender and racial/ethnic diversity.
- In science and engineering cases, some of the external reviewers may be prestigious senior researchers from corporations or research institutes, rather than universities.
- In certain arts and humanities cases, some of the external reviewers may be well-established museum curators or artists.
- The list (see Sample Table) should be in alphabetical order and include title/current rank, home institution, year of doctorate (if available), a link to the scholar's website, email address, whether the scholar has been the candidate's Ph.D. advisor, postdoctoral advisor, or co-author, whether they wrote a letter for the candidate's associate review, and the rationale for including each scholar on the list."

b) Myriad Concerns

The FAS faculty identified and expressed myriad concerns about the external letter process. Below we discuss five main concerns: the large number of letters, the workload required of each letter-writer, the constraints in composing comparand and recipient lists, how these requirements impact interdisciplinary or emerging fields, and finally, the inclusion of a comparand list at all.

1/ Number of External Letters

First, some (but not all) colleagues think that the number of required letters for tenure reviews (12 to 15) is too high ("just an absurd amount," as one colleague put it); that it forces departments to go to some external scholars several times, to write letters for different promotion reviews; that this erodes good will; and, as people decline to write, departments are compelled to go to second- (or lower) tier choices, which affects the quality of the evaluation and reflects poorly on the candidate.

Harvard requires more external letters in tenure reviews than many of our peers. The minimum number of letters required by the peer institutions we researched[22] ranges from five (Cornell and the University of Michigan [College of Literature, Science, and the Arts]) to 10 (Yale and Columbia, although Columbia prefers 12-15 letters), with other institutions falling within this range (University of California, Berkeley [seven]; and Stanford [eight]). Data on the number of letters required by MIT or Princeton do not seem to be publicly available.

Requiring 12 letters can also significantly slow what is already perceived by some as a glacial pace at which Harvard makes tenure decisions, which can be especially consequential in retention cases. There is (or is perceived to be) little flexibility; that is, a case may not move forward without 12 substantive letters (even if, for example, there are 11 uniformly strong letters).

Departments whose candidates work in smaller fields can face special challenges in meeting the required number. The pool of available experts is smaller to begin with, and if the department itself is a leader in the field, it must ask "individuals with less expertise in the specific area, who in turn feel unable to contribute because they do not have expertise," as one faculty member told TTRC.

As this colleague said, "Reducing the number of letters required, and thence making it easier to acquire acceptances from appropriate persons, would make a huge difference in the anxiety levels of department leaders and relieve our professional colleagues around the world of being asked nearly every year to write for us in one case or another."

2/ Writing Letters is Onerous

Second, because of how the letter-writing exercise is designed, writing a letter can be a lot of work, which reduces the response rate and creates ill will among external colleagues.

The Sample Tenure Review Letter[23] in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* says, "Based on our tenure criteria, we ask that you compare Professor [NAME] with the other scholars included on the list below. Because we are interested in Professor [NAME]'s current impact on the field, as well as Professor [NAME]'s future trajectory, we have listed scholars in a range of career stages, from recently tenured to some of the most influential figures in the field. We ask that you keep the career stage of each scholar in mind as you undertake these comparisons. To aid your evaluation, we have enclosed a copy of Professor [NAME]'s *curriculum vitae*, teaching/advising statement, research statement, statement on overlap and joint authorship in publications, website link, [FOR BOOK FIELDS OR ART-MAKING FIELDS, INSERT "reviews,"] and a sampling of Professor [NAME]'s work."

As one tenured faculty member said, "We put an immense burden on our colleagues…especially given how long and involved a letter for a Harvard candidate must be, with its comparison of the work of 5-6 [sic] scholars. This is particularly true in my own field…where writing a responsible letter of this sort is an

[22] This information was collected in September 2020.
[23] Please see 15G, "Sample Tenure Review Letter," in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

immense undertaking, requiring at least a week of reading and several days of writing to do responsibly."

Other colleagues approach the letter differently, which itself suggests that Harvard is insufficiently clear about what the letter-writer's task is. As another tenured faculty member said, **"**I've had offline conversations just recently where people said, do you expect me to read all these papers from the comparands? I have to make it clear to them, in a way the letter [to external letter-writers] does not…we're looking for your existing impression and existing expertise, not to do three days of work."

Even as writing about a candidate's scholarship may be onerous, commenting on the candidate's teaching, advising, and mentoring may be extraneous.[24] First, departments choose external evaluators based on their research expertise (not teaching, advising, or mentoring expertise). Second, departments send letter writers only the candidate's teaching/advising statement, but that is insufficient information for most letter writers to make knowledgeable assessments of the candidate's abilities or performance in these areas. Moreover, external colleagues lack knowledge of the department's or the FAS's culture and context for gauging the candidate's performance. In TTRC's review of a year's worth of external letters in tenure reviews, the vast majority of comments could be considered superficial (e.g., "It is clear from Professor XXX's teaching statement she/he/they care(s) a great deal about undergraduate teaching") or make assumptions about the candidate's teaching based on talks or workshops that the letter writer attended. Approximately half of the letters did not mention teaching at all.

3/ Requirements for Recipient Lists and Comparand Lists

The parameters for recipient lists and comparand lists can be challenging to meet. In associate reviews and tenure reviews, according to the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* the list of letter-writers must satisfy conditions in terms of rank ("tenured scholars" for associate reviews and "ordinarily full professors" for tenure reviews), gender and racial/ethnic diversity, and "appropriately broad" representation of the field. In tenure reviews, the comparand list must meet requirements in terms of rank ("at least two full professors" and "scholars who themselves meet the standards for tenure within the FAS"), career stage ("span[ning] a range of experiences from the strongest recently tenured scholars to full professors who are well-established leaders in the field"), and gender and racial/ethnic diversity.

[24] 15G, "Sample Tenure Review Letter," in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* asks the letter writer to evaluate the candidate "Based on our tenure criteria" and lists those criteria, including "teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students." In addition, starting in AY 21-22, the "Sample Tenure Review Letter" notes the pandemic-related appointment extensions and teaching relief that were made available to tenure-track faculty and states, "Evaluators should assess Professor [NAME]'s aggregated scholarship, teaching and advising, and service without any penalty for having received an appointment extension [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief], due to the pandemic….regarding teaching relief, Professor (NAME) should have their scholarship, teaching and advising, and service evaluated as if they had taught the course for which they received relief.] COVID-related clock extensions [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief] should not be counted against candidates in any way."]"

At the same time, departments sometimes strive to meet parameters that they think are required (even though they are not) or that they think are "unwritten expectations." For instance, departments sometimes think that external letter-writers must be considered tenurable at Harvard or must currently be at peer institutions (in both cases, they do not). Another assumption, in some cases, is that the recipient list must include international colleagues. The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* could be clearer about whether this is a requirement or not.

While securing qualified and diverse external evaluators is important, the parameters do not allow departments to take full advantage of extra-departmental, intra-Harvard expertise. Cases can sometimes benefit from such evaluations – whether from tenured faculty in other FAS departments or relevant centers, or from scholars at other Harvard Schools who work in related fields. In the latter instance, this might mean a letter-writer from Harvard Medical School (for a biologist candidate), or from Harvard Law School (for a historian), or the Harvard Kennedy School (for a government scholar). Such extra-departmental Harvard faculty often have substantive information about the candidate's scholarship, teaching, advising, mentoring, and/or citizenship. They may, for example, have co-taught with the candidate, or they may chair another department, program, or center to which the candidate belongs. Extra-departmental, intra-Harvard expertise can also be especially useful in interdisciplinary cases. In all cases, of course, proper guardrails should be installed to prevent conflicts of interest, to mitigate bias, and to ensure that these letters add to, rather than subtract from, the information that would be received from truly external-to-Harvard letters (see TTRC's recommendations in Section III.C.1.c.2 ("Letter Writers") below.

FAS tenured faculty themselves are sometimes asked to write "external" letters for candidates at other Harvard Schools. For example, in addition to letters external to Harvard, Harvard Medical School requires letters from "Six Professors at Harvard who are not appointed in the candidate's local department but who are familiar with the candidate's field, and often his/her achievements in other relevant areas (administrative service, teaching, and perhaps other Significant Supporting Activities)."[25]

In addition, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*'s guidance on review-committee composition recognizes the importance of extra-departmental, intra-Harvard expertise.[26] External-letter requirements could similarly reflect the value of such expertise. Determining whether or not this approach would be appropriate and, if so, who suitable letter writers might be, could occur through a discussion between the department and the divisional dean/SEAS Dean.

---

[25] Please see Step 5 of Section 7.3, "Procedures for Promotion to Professor," in the HMS Faculty of Medicine Handbook, page 65.

[26] For example, Step 4 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," says that the tenure review committee "should include a tenured faculty member from another department/SEAS voting cluster….When there is an overlap in research interests, the chair should ask a representative of the appropriate center, institute, or initiative to serve on or consult with the review committee. Chairs are also strongly encouraged to include a faculty member from any degree/curricular standing committees in which the candidate has at least a half-time appointment. In addition, the review committee chair should seek an evaluation(s) from the chair(s) of the undergraduate and graduate degree/curricular standing committee(s) of which the candidate is a member."

Further insights can also be gained, in some cases, by soliciting letters from past mentors or collaborators (either internal or external to Harvard). For example, these individuals can share their perspective on the candidate's contribution to joint work. Here too, it would be important to establish guardrails, as mentioned in the discussion above.

One faculty member told TTRC that it is not only time consuming and exacting to compile recipient lists, it can take attention away from internal feedback on the candidate: **"**Both the associate review and tenure review involve external feedback as well as internal feedback. Something extremely natural that happens is the review committee spends a lot of time worrying about external feedback, a lot of time spent choosing people, stress goes into how many do we need, have we met all the requirements. That pushes out, that makes less room for, internal feedback."

4/ Challenges for Interdisciplinary Fields

In addition to the issue briefly touched on in Section III.C.1.b.1 ("Number of External Letters") above, collecting letters for candidates in small, emerging, and/or interdisciplinary fields presents special difficulties. As one tenured faculty member said, "It's a big problem for us. We're highly interdisciplinary and are also a small field. So you get evaluations from people who can only evaluate a small fraction of the person's input. That always seems risky. And the number of letters required means you run out of people. If you use up all the people in the field to get the letters, the ad hoc has to be the second tier. You end up going to B-level scholars at that point. "

The fractional input from letter writers is an important point. However, this colleague's comment also reveals what seems to be a common misperception – that external letter-writers are disqualified from serving on the ad hoc committee. In fact, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* does not prohibit external letter-writers from serving on the ad hoc, a point that could be clarified in the *Handbook*. As the *Handbook* currently states, "External letter writers typically do not serve on the *ad hoc* committee, although experts who sent no, or little, response to a department's request for a letter may be considered. In exceptional cases, the department can include in its *ad hoc* committee recommendations someone who has already submitted a substantive letter."[27] This guidance may even need updating, as Senior Vice Provost Singer states that possible ad hoc members are often identified by looking at the list of people who were solicited to write an external letter (whether or not they agreed to write). If their name is not in the dossier, they may not rise to attention. Thus, the departmental strategy of not asking someone to write a letter, in an effort to "save" them for the ad hoc, is counterproductive (and can prevent the most relevant information on the candidate from entering the process at the earliest stage).

The fractional issue can also arise when departments compile comparand lists in interdisciplinary cases, as we discuss in Section 5 ("Comparand Lists") below.

[27] Please see Step 14 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position."

Fractions aside, the "full professor" requirement for external letter-writers in tenure-review cases can also be problematic in interdisciplinary and other emerging fields. In new fields, there may not yet be many or any senior faculty with the right expertise. Moreover, as one member of the Standing Committee on Women said, "[W]omen faculty and faculty of color often reinvent fields or create new fields or extend boundaries of fields. And we want that. Given that external letter writers and ad hoc members all have to be full professors, they tend to be well-established, older, and may have fixed ideas about what the field is. So that's another area where what looks like an innovation to one person looks peripheral, pointless, and minor to another person."

5/ Comparand Lists

Comparand lists are generally disliked, by both Harvard faculty and external scholars.

Some letter-writers are uncomfortable ranking colleagues or say that they are being asked to compare "apples and oranges." Others (letter-writers and Harvard faculty alike) say that it's unethical to ask people to write about colleagues who aren't aware that they are being listed as a comparand.

Some colleagues say that, as currently designed, Harvard's comparand exercise is too onerous for letter-writers. While ample information is provided about the candidate (according to the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* "*curriculum vitae*, teaching/advising statement, research statement, statement on overlap and joint authorship in publications, website link, [FOR BOOK FIELDS OR ART-MAKING FIELDS, INSERT "reviews,"] and a sampling of Professor [NAME]'s work"), less information is provided about the comparands: "[NAME], [TITLE/CURRENT RANK], [HOME INSTITUTION], [DOCTORATE YEAR AND INSTITUTION], [WEBSITE LINK]."[28]

As the Standing Committee on Women notes, "The comparands and their institutions are named, but no further information is given about them. Therefore, the reviewers are asked to rely on their memories and impressions of the comparands' reputations, rather than any serious comparison based on their work. This also makes the letters more time-consuming to prepare conscientiously (as many reviewers have told those of us who have served as department chairs)."

Furthermore, several colleagues said that the comparison list is a place where bias can enter the system: "I have heard too many stories about how comparand lists were manipulated one way or the other - stacked with heavy hitters to make things hard, or with straw men to make things easy."

Another colleague said, "At best, this process replicates field hierarchies that have sometimes excluded women and minoritized populations, at worst, a promotion committee can try to game the system by defining the field or the comparand list so narrowly that they get only the letters they expect…."

Bias can come in many forms. As one tenured faculty member said, "My own sense is people are more likely to pick their own former postdocs and grad students, who are all genders. They pick the people they know, the people in their orbit, which is another kind of bias."

[28] Please see 15G, "Sample Tenure Review Letter" in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

There may be disciplinary differences in how useful the comparand exercise is. One tenured colleague said that the humanities are not conducive to ranking comparands: **"**A lot of case-statement writing is sifting through letters and drawing up charts and saying that X person is in fourth position, or Y position is in sixth position, etc. There's a divergence of opinions in the humanities that is healthy and not conducive to drawing up charts."

Another colleague sees the comparand exercise as **"**outsource[ing] our decision making. This is enabled by our asking for rankings, which sets the direction of much discussion. Perhaps not asking for rankings might be a way for us to gain information and better retain our agency in making the decision that is best for the university."

Regarding ranking, TTRC encountered a common misperception that the candidate needs to come out "on top" in the rankings, besting even the "gold standard" leader in the field who may also be on the comparand list. In fact, according to senior leaders TTRC spoke with, many cases pass through CAP or beyond where the candidate is not "#1" on the list. The comparand list's purpose is less to establish absolute rankings and more to provide a fuller picture of how the candidate is contributing to the field; and "gold standard" comparands serve as benchmarks to assess the candidate's trajectory. Is a candidate not necessarily now, but on track to become, the equivalent of, or successor to, that leader in the field?

Comparand lists, as one tenured colleague pointed out, are fundamentally anchoring mechanisms to help generate feedback. In fact, anchored questions can indeed elicit more useful information than completely open-ended questions: "If you don't have such an anchor, people will write letters supporting people getting tenure. There'll be a bias towards that, and the letters won't be that informative. We rarely say, don't give this person tenure. It's not a human thing to do, and it doesn't support your field….On the whole, the anchoring mechanism of the comparand list is more helpful for high-quality discussion than it disadvantages us."

In addition, asking for comparisons without providing a comparand list may, in many cases, prove unhelpful if the comparands mentioned don't widely overlap. Thus, a list of comparands as a starting point, with an invitation to include additional names, helps focus letter writers on a common set of names. Moreover, the specific mention of a senior leader can prompt a discussion of the candidate's trajectory.

Harvard is not alone in providing comparand lists.[29] Yale, Stanford, and Columbia, like Harvard, ask for comparisons and provide comparand lists (for Yale, three comparands at the same career stage as the candidate and one "aspirational" comparand; for Stanford, four to six comparands; and for Columbia, five to six comparands). Of the peer schools we researched, we found only one institution that does not include a comparand list: the University of Michigan [College of Literature, Science, and the Arts] asks for comparisons but leaves it to the letter writer to generate their own comparands.[30] We did not find

[29] This peer information was collected in September 2020.

[30] The University of Michigan's solicitation letter for promotion reviews states, "Based on the enclosed materials and any other knowledge you have of [his/her] work or professional accomplishments, we would like your candid

publicly available comparand information for the University of California, Berkeley; Princeton, MIT, or Cornell.

One Harvard faculty member, who has served on CAP and read hundreds of tenure cases, said, "If you read them, you'd become a believer in the comparand method. Because in most cases, letter writers say, I see what you're trying to do here, you're giving me some reference. And these days we're very good about putting amazing people on the comparand list. So there's no confusion. The real issue is, [letter writers] are not doing the comparison. But together, the letters give an extremely rich view of the field and where everyone is sitting."

c) Recommendations

Taking all our colleagues' comments into account, TTRC proposes changes to the external letter system to accomplish several goals. Our recommendations are designed to reduce the workload, and thereby increase response rates, for departments and for external letter-writers. They clarify and introduce more flexibility into the parameters for recipient lists and comparand lists. They structure the letter to external letter writers in ways designed to elicit more useful information for assessing a candidate and to mitigate bias. They also attempt to better align the external evaluation process between the associate review and tenure review.

1/ Number of External Letters

- **For tenure reviews, we recommend reducing the required number of external letters from 12-15 to 10. We also recommend stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that some flexibility in the number of letters is allowed, provided that the review committee makes a strong case (first to the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and then in the case statement) for their departure from the required number of letters.** We recommend this reduction to more closely map our process to what departments really need to make an informed assessment of the candidate. This may be especially useful in smaller fields, in which a few key voices are essential, where expertise in the relevant area is limited, and where additional letters may yield little additional insight. This recommendation is in line with other peer institutions.

2/ Letter Writers

In the recommendations below, we address colleagues' difficulties meeting the current requirements for external letter-writers. We propose greater flexibility in these parameters, and we also expand the parameters in new ways.

- **For tenure reviews, we recommend allowing some flexibility in the "full professor" requirement for external letter writers, provided that the review committee makes a strong**

evaluation of [Candidate Name's] written and scholarly contributions in relation to others of comparable experience in [his/her] field."

case (first to the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and then in the case statement) for their departure from the norm. (Please see the recommendation below for more about the rationale for the recipient list.) In particular, in emerging fields that do not yet have a large cohort of senior faculty, it may be appropriate for the letter writer to be an outstanding associate professor with tenure (or perhaps even on the cusp of tenure).

In addition, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* already states, "In science and engineering cases, some of the external reviewers may be prestigious senior researchers from corporations or research institutes, rather than universities. In certain arts and humanities cases, some of the external reviewers may be well-established museum curators or artists." We endorse continued flexibility in this regard.

- **For tenure reviews, we recommend stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that external letter-writers do not themselves need to be viewed as tenurable at Harvard or need to currently be from peer institutions**. **We also recommend that the *Handbook* state what, if any, the requirements are for including international colleagues on recipient lists**. These clarifications will address current confusion about these parameters.

- **For tenure reviews, we recommend allowing review committees to solicit two or three "external" letters from relevant scholars within Harvard (i.e., tenured faculty from other FAS departments, or from centers, or from other Harvard Schools), as appropriate, and subject to approval by the divisional dean/SEAS Dean. These letters should not count toward the ten required external letters, but instead act to supplement the external evaluations**. These letters should aim to capture expertise from scholars who work in related fields and/or have substantive information about the candidate's scholarship, teaching, advising, mentoring and/or citizenship. The letter writer's relationship to the candidate should be clearly stated in the letter and any collaborations disclosed (e.g., joint publications or shared grant(s)). To determine whether extra-departmental, intra-Harvard evaluation would be appropriate in any given case, and who suitable letter writers might be, the department should discuss these matters with the divisional dean/SEAS Dean.

- **To more broadly include valuable feedback from faculty whose closer relationships with the candidate currently exclude them from serving as letter writers, we recommend allowing departments to solicit external letters from collaborators and past mentors (whether within or outside of Harvard). These letters should be held in a separate category and not count toward the ten required external letters, but instead act to supplement the external evaluations.** At present, there is wide variability among departments in soliciting letters from colleagues who are not at "arm's length" from the candidate.

- **To better align the associate review with the tenure review – in particular, to provide a better sense of the candidate's trajectory over time and whether, or how, they addressed any issues**

that came up in their associate review – we recommend that a subset of external letter-writers from the associate review also write external letters for the candidate's tenure review.

- As general guidance, we recommend that this subset be less than half of the total number of external letters in the tenure review. However, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* should note that the exact number of overlapping writers should be guided by what kind of information the department needs, and who they think is best qualified to provide it. In smaller fields, we expect a higher proportion of repeat letter writers.
- As this provides an opportunity for departments to load the subset with known positive or known critical letter-writers from the associate review, we urge (1) careful divisional dean/SEAS Dean review and approval of departments' lists of letter-writers, and (2) justification in the tenure case statement as to why specific letter writers from the associate review were or were not chosen. The latter is important both to encourage the tenure review committee to think carefully about their choices and to alert the department about their choices before the case moves forward. We also caution against too heavy reliance on repeat writers from the associate review, as some letter writers may be tempted to briefly update their previous letter in a paragraph or two and not fully engage with the candidate's materials.
- Appropriately different solicitation letters should be sent to letter-writers who either did, or didn't, previously write letters in the candidate's associate review. In addition to the existing template for external letter-writers, a second template (or adjustments to the existing template) should be provided in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* for those who previously wrote letters in the associate review.

- **Given the recommendations above that grant more flexibility in, and expand, who can be a letter-writer, we recommend underscoring in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* that clear justification for each letter writer, and for the list as a whole, should be provided during divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval of the list, as well as in the case statement.** This rationale for the recipient list is already required in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.[31] It will be especially helpful when the list includes an atypical letter writer (e.g., in terms of rank, institution, or field) or has an atypical composition overall. The rationale can also help the divisional dean/SEAS Dean, CAP, and the ad hoc committee understand why any intra-

[31] In Step 7a in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," when the recipient list is sent to the divisional dean for approval, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* says: "The list (see Sample Table) should be in alphabetical order and include title/current rank, home institution, year of doctorate (if available), a link to the scholar's website, email address, whether the scholar has been the candidate's Ph.D. advisor, postdoctoral advisor, or co-author, whether they wrote a letter for the candidate's associate review, and the rationale for including each scholar on the list." Step 11, describing the case statement, says, "Describe the logic underlying the composition of the external letter writer group, especially in cases where the candidate is multidisciplinary." In 15.B, the "Sample Table of External Letter Writers" includes a column for each letter-writer's name to be accompanied by a "Brief Rationale for Including this Person on the Recipient List."

Harvard "external" letter writers and any collaborators or past mentors were chosen, and what the review committee's reasoning was, in tenure reviews, for its choice of letter-writers from the associate review.

- **In interdisciplinary fields, we recommend that the review committee be allowed to write to two (or more, as necessary) different groups of external letter-writers, with two (or more, as necessary) different comparand lists, as appropriate.** This allows departments to gather the right range of expertise, calibrated to the right comparison set, and allows experts to weigh in on what they know without necessarily having to address the whole.

- **We recommend clarifying a common misunderstanding by stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that writing an external letter does not disqualify someone from serving on an ad hoc committee, and we recommend explicitly noting that the departmental strategy of not asking someone to write an external letter, in an effort to "save" them for the ad hoc, is counterproductive (and decreases the opportunity to get the most relevant information at the earliest stage), as potential ad hoc members are often identified by looking at the list of people who were solicited to write an external letter.**

3/ Comparand Lists

After much deliberation and taking into account all the comments that we heard, TTRC does not believe that comparand lists should be abolished. As discussed above, asking letter-writers to assess the candidate relative to specific individuals focuses their thinking in ways that providing no comparands would not. It creates some shared benchmarks among letter-writers (as a starting point, while recognizing that some letter-writers may also branch out), while also screening out some of the bias that might enter the system if every letter-writer generated the entire comparand list themselves. In addition, Harvard's comparand lists, which typically feature a range of career experience, help us to gauge the future trajectory of the candidate, not only their present status in the field. We are convinced that better framing of the comparison exercise, and judicious flexibility when needed, will give review committees the most useful information needed to assess the candidate.

- **We recommend maintaining the current number of comparands (i.e., "four to five") in tenure reviews**. Several faculty affirmed that departments typically need some comparands who are in the candidate's cohort and a few scholars who are more established. In addition, in interdisciplinary fields, departments may need four to five comparands to cover the range of the candidate's work. Four to five comparands also helps to ensure gender and racial/ethnic diversity.
- **We recommend that, when appropriate, non-tenured scholars should be eligible for inclusion on comparand lists.** This flexibility is especially important in emerging fields, where there may not yet be many senior scholars, but where an associate professor on the cusp of earning tenure may be an appropriate comparand. This choice should be clearly justified in the case statement.

- **We recommend underscoring in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* the importance of a clear rationale in the case statement for each comparand and the list as a whole.[32]** As with our recommendation of a clearer rationale of the recipient list in Section 2/ ("Letter Writers") above, a clearer rationale for the comparand list will be especially helpful when the list includes atypical members or has an atypical composition overall.
- **We recommend engaging letter-writers' input to a greater degree, in creating a set of comparands. Harvard's comparand list can be presented to letter writers as a suggested starting-point, subject to substitutions or additions that the external letter-writer thinks would create the most appropriate comparison group.** This change will help to address letter writers' objection that they are being asked to compare the wrong people. It will better utilize letter-writers' expertise and help to generate information departments really need: who do experts see as the relevant constellation of scholars around the candidate, and where do they place the candidate in that constellation? Currently, Harvard's letter to external letter-writers requires that they use Harvard's comparands and invites other additions ("Based on our tenure criteria, we ask that you compare Professor [NAME] with the other scholars included on the list below….If we have overlooked any leading scholar(s) who should be included, please add them to your comparison. We would also welcome comparisons with any emerging scholars who work in this field."[33]). The template should convey that it is the norm, not the exception, for the evaluator to provide other, more appropriate names.
- **In interdisciplinary fields, we recommend that the review committee be allowed to write to two (or more, as necessary) different groups of external letter-writers, with two (or more, as necessary) different comparand lists, as appropriate.** Please see Section III.C.1.c.2 ("Letter Writers") for more discussion.

4/ Template for Letter to External Letter Writers

- As discussed at length in Section III.B.4 ("Criteria for Associate Promotion"), TTRC proposed changing the criteria for associate promotion and reflecting that change in the template used to write to letter-writers for associate reviews. We reiterate that recommendation immediately below. As we said in that section:

  One of the most effective ways to strengthen associate reviews is to modify the criteria for associate promotion. We recommend changing the criteria from "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major institution within three to five years" to "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years."

[32] Currently, Step 11 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," states, "Comparands: Provide a list of names, home institutions, and links to each comparand's home page, with a brief rationale for each comparand. Explain how this comparand list represents an appropriate range of career experience and reflects an appropriately broad definition of the field."

[33] Please see 15G, "Sample Tenure Review Letter," in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

> **In tandem with this change, we recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers include not only the associate-promotion criteria, but also Harvard's tenure criteria.**
>
> **We also recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers ask whether the candidate should be tenured *now* at Harvard**.

Moreover, the template can be changed in the ways we note below – to reduce the burden of what is being asked of letter writers, to elicit more useful information for the review committee, and to preempt the letter-writer's concerns as well as increase the likelihood that they will write a letter.

- **We recommend that the candidate's "teaching/advising statement" be removed from the materials that are sent to letter writers, so that letter writers do not feel compelled to comment on areas that they may not be qualified or have enough information to comment on.** However, to capture comments from any colleagues who have an informed basis for commenting on the candidate's teaching, advising, and mentoring, we recommend that the template include a sentence such as, "If you have any knowledge about their teaching, advising or mentoring, please feel free to share that information in your letter."
- **The template letter to external letter writers (for both associate reviews and tenure reviews) should pose questions to the letter writer that elicit specifics.** (E.g., "What things must the candidate do to merit tenure at Harvard?" or "What are your specific reservations about this candidate?")
- **In addition to the template's standard request to all letter-writers, the template should include a place for the review committee to ask customized questions, subject to divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval.** This measure is designed to help departments to get the information that they need.
- **For associate reviews and tenure reviews, the template should circumscribe the letter-writer's task, to make clear what is being asked of them, to reduce the perception of undue burden, and to hopefully preempt their declining to write.**

  For example, the template can indicate:
  - They are being asked for a general assessment of the candidate's status in the field and whether the candidate meets the FAS's criteria. They are *not* being asked to read everything the candidate and the comparands have written.
  - For interdisciplinary candidates, the letter writer need only evaluate those parts of the candidate's work that fall within the letter writer's area of expertise.
  - As noted in Section III.C.1.c.3 ("Comparand Lists") above, in tenure reviews Harvard's comparand list is a suggested starting point, subject to substitutions or additions that the external letter-writer thinks would create the most appropriate list. It is the norm, not the exception, for the evaluator to provide additional, more appropriate names.
  - In tenure reviews, for any comparands who are at a far more advanced career stage than the candidate (and may even be considered the gold standard in the field), the letter writer's task is to compare the candidate to such comparands when those comparands were at a comparable stage in their careers. In other words, the

comparand exercise is, in part, to gauge a candidate's trajectory. Saying this in the template can preempt concerns or confusion about comparing people when there is a difference in seniority.

To further remove obstacles to securing external feedback, we recommend that if a scholar declines to write a letter due to a busy schedule, and their evaluation is deemed essential, either the committee chair or a neutral party (e.g., an assistant dean) should be allowed to take the expert's evaluation by phone. This should be included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*. This practice occurs in other Harvard Schools.[34]

2. Internal Letters

a) Concerns

We now move on to a discussion of the confidential, internal letters that tenured faculty write to the FAS Dean at the end of the departmental tenure-review process, before the case is reviewed by CAP. From TTRC's outreach, we learned that these letters are a source of anxiety to tenure-track and tenured faculty and contribute to a climate of distrust.

Faculty may write whatever they like in these letters. The official guidance on their purpose and content is minimal. As the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* says, "These letters express the tenured faculty members' views on the promotion and will be included in the candidate's dossier to be reviewed by the Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP) and the *ad hoc* committee, as appropriate."

Because internal letters are confidential – a communique directly to the FAS Dean – some faculty fear that colleagues may be silent in departmental discussions and then voice an opinion in an internal letter that could damage the case. The internal letters are also a source of stress for tenure-track faculty, who feel their case can be derailed at the eleventh hour by one critical internal letter.

In reality, we heard CAP, the Provost, and the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity state explicitly that it is never the case that one bad letter will torpedo a case; there is too much other information that is also being taken into consideration. In addition, many internal letters are, if anything, lacking in substance; a faculty may simply say "yes" or "no," and that they support the department's decision or not. Indeed, Provost Garber described how these laconic letters can hurt the case. "[I]n some departments, routinely, if the person isn't exactly in the letter writer's field, they say, I trust the judgment of my colleagues. But by default, the department has less of a voice, because a voice without reasons carries less weight. The ad hoc needs to know what people are thinking. And in CAP you

---

[34] For example, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health states in Appendix II of their 2019 *Policies and Procedures for Faculty Appointments, Reappointments, and Promotions*: "Individuals who decline the request for a letter on the basis of a busy schedule are offered an interview with a member of the committee, ordinarily the chair, as an alternative."

probably view it the same way – you need to know the basis for the decision." Finally, some colleagues may purposely write a bland internal letter, in the hopes of avoiding being called to testify in an ad hoc committee.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that internal letters are a channel for information that runs in parallel with, rather than flowing freely into, departmental deliberations on a case. As such, in less functional departments, they can serve as a workaround for a deeper problem, which is a lack of honest exchange about a case.

As one tenured faculty member said, "[T]his practice allows individual faculty members to avoid taking responsibility for their positions or defending their arguments the way we do in all other remits of academic life – which is to say, in open fora, with room for debate and disagreement, under the conditions of intellectual honesty that are afforded by collective exchange."

Another tenured faculty member recalled their contrasting experience at a peer institution: "There were no confidential letters to the dean. And to vote on a tenure case, you had to be present at the meeting. The idea was that senior faculty would have a robust discussion about the candidate and their merits and weaknesses, and as a group, they would reach a considered consensus….those discussions are not as robust [at Harvard]…In terms of the departmental culture and a lively discussion of where a department is, intellectually and otherwise, in the context of discussing a colleague's work and future prospects, something is really lost."

The Standing Committee on Women said, "[Internal letters] undermine the process on both ends: they're corrosive to departments, who can wind up with a purely performative consensus rather than an honest and probing discussion, and then they're corrosive at the *ad hoc* level, where chairs can be undercut by their own colleagues, in writing, as they represent a colleague based on department discussions."

Even as some faculty wish for greater openness in departmental discussions, others expressed a desire for more narrow readership of the letters once a tenure case leaves the department. Confidentiality that may be unproductive at the departmental-review level may be appropriate at the ad hoc stage, which includes scholars from outside Harvard as well as Harvard faculty from outside the candidate's department(s). In TTRC's discussions with faculty, it came as a surprise to some colleagues to learn that the internal letters are read not only by the FAS Dean, but also by CAP and ad hoc members. Making this readership more widely known would not only allow faculty to write their letters accordingly, it could also counter concerns that people can "say anything" in a letter that might torpedo a case. The wide readership of the letters provides some accountability.

Some faculty, departments, and senior leaders made clear to TTRC that they value the information that internal letters can provide, especially when a department's culture simply is not conducive to free and open exchange of views. Thus, TTRC had mixed views on whether internal letters should be kept or eliminated.

Ultimately, we recommend that internal letters should continue to be part of the tenure review process, but with significant changes, as noted below. Our proposed changes in process and content are meant to occur in tandem with the harder, ongoing work of creating more frank and open departmental cultures and more fully engaging tenured colleagues in the process and discussion. We do not want to simply concede and entrench the deeper problem, with the letters as a workaround for honest exchange.

b) Recommendations

The recommendations below acknowledge broader cultural issues that need work but also tailor the process and the internal letter itself to more effectively yield information that CAP, the FAS Dean, ad hoc members, and the President need to make informed decisions about the candidate. The recommendations attempt to engage senior faculty more fully in evaluation of their tenure-track colleagues. More standardized guidelines for writing letters can also help to reduce bias.

- <u>Strengthening Departmental Discussion</u>**: For those departments with less robust cultures of departmental discussion in tenure review cases, we recommend that such departments acknowledge this culture and work to develop a more open, deliberative ethos.** Methods for doing this will vary by department, but we encourage the divisional dean/SEAS Dean's office to provide best practices to the department chair and review committee chair as to how this can be accomplished. For example, as one possible practice, all senior faculty could be asked to state their views in the departmental discussion before a vote is taken. This can help to close the gap between what is publicly debated about a case and what may appear in an internal letter as well as encourage tenured faculty to more deeply engage in the case.

- **<u>Readership:</u>**
    - **We recommend clearly stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere who reads the internal letters, as this is not widely understood**. Faculty should be informed that not only the FAS Dean, but also CAP and ad hoc members read their letters.
    - **Whereas internal letters are currently read by the FAS Dean, CAP, and members of the ad hoc committee, we recommend including internal letters in the dossier only up through the CAP stage and, at the ad hoc stage, ceasing to make the letters available to <u>external</u> ad hoc members (i.e., members outside Harvard, and Harvard faculty who are outside the candidate's department(s)). At the ad hoc stage, the President and Provost would, as is currently the case, be able to read the letters**.
        - This approach (1) better preserves (and keeps within the institution) the confidentiality of what senior faculty colleagues say in the letters, (2) restricts the reading of the letters to those with the fullest understanding of the departmental and institutional context for what is being said in the letters, and (3) focuses the external ad hoc members' attention on the candidate's scholarship, impact, and scholarly standing in the national and international community. This focus on scholarship would be explicitly stated in guidance to these external members. As we

are seeking from these external members their independent assessment of the candidate's scholarship and impact, they would not need to read the internal letters to make that assessment.

- To ensure a baseline of shared knowledge, the FAS Dean could summarize (either in written format or else orally at the ad hoc meeting) the internal letters for the external ad hoc members who do not see the letters.
- At CAP, if issues appear in the internal letters that were not addressed in the case statement, CAP can/should send the case statement back to the department to address that issue before the case proceeds to the ad hoc stage. This can help to reduce any disjunction between the official departmental case and the internal letters and can reduce the perception that internal letters are a "wild card" with an unpredictable effect on a case.

Note: TTRC is not without reservations about this recommendation, as departmental colleagues who vote "no" in tenure-review cases are often asked to serve as witnesses at the ad hoc stage. Access to internal letters can give ad hoc members a fuller context for understanding the witnesses' views. One possible compromise is to give ad hoc members access to the internal letters, but to remove comments about departmental process and leave substantive comments about the faculty members' work.

- **Contents of Internal Letters:**

  Earlier in this report, we discussed how standardizing what information is collected, and how it is collected, can both yield more relevant information and also create more equity across cases and mitigate bias.

  We recommend standardizing internal letters to a greater degree, by providing specific guidance on what these letters should address. We recommend the creation of an online form and increased communication about how to write internal letters, at the departmental, decanal, and Presidential/Provostial levels. This guidance should elicit more useful information by (1) countering concerns that people can "say anything" in a letter that might negatively impact a case, (2) encouraging more specific and relevant information, and (3) providing context for the comments or viewpoints.

  - Online form: As one possible model, each senior faculty member could be given access to an online form pin-protected by Harvard Key. The form would include both check-box questions and questions to be answered in free-form text. All of these questions would be intended to illuminate not only the senior faculty member's views on the candidate, structured in key categories, but also the extent and nature of the senior faculty member's engagement with the process, connection to the candidate, and whether or not they aired their views in departmental discussion, among other things. For example:
    - The form could ask senior faculty to characterize the strength of their "yes" or "no" vote (e.g., "yes," "strong yes," "yes, with significant reservations," "no," "strong no,"

"no, with significant positives," etc.) and to then fully explain their rationale for voting "yes," "no," or "abstain."

- The form could ask for input on the candidate's research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service. Does the faculty member have additional relevant information (e.g., observed the candidate's teaching, served on a committee together, attended a research talk)?
- For context, the form could ask whether or not the faculty member expressed their views at the departmental meeting, and if so, what was the response, and if not, why not. This element is important, as it provides perspective on whether or not the views in the letter withstood any corrections or other modifications in departmental discussion. It also foregrounds, for CAP and beyond, any disjunction between the department's official case and internal letters.
- For context, the form can ask the senior faculty member to comment on the review process itself: was the review well-run and thorough, how thoroughly did the department discuss the comparand list, the external letter-writers, the case statement, diversity concerns, etc.?
- The form can ask about the candidate's engagement with the review process: E.g., did the senior colleague attend the candidate's talk, read the candidate's publications, or observe them teaching?
- The form can ask about the department's mentoring of the candidate and their own role in mentoring the candidate.
- The questions on this online form should be publicly available, for the sake of transparency.

- **Education:** Educational efforts about this new approach to internal letters could include the following:
  - A training session on how to run promotion reviews (including internal letters) as part of the annual chairs training run by the Office for Faculty Affairs.
  - Departments could be asked to dedicate a faculty meeting each year to discussing the importance of internal letters and how to write a useful letter.
  - A memo from the FAS Dean and/or President and Provost could be sent to each review committee at the start of the review process, and/or to the senior departmental faculty at the internal-letter stage, in every promotion review. In addition to explaining the online form and the readership of the internal letters, the memo could explicitly note the following:
    - The senior faculty member's letter should be more substantive than a one-sentence "yes," "no," or "abstain."
    - Writing a bland internal letter is not a successful strategy to avoid being called to testify in an ad hoc; in fact, it can cause the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity or others to directly follow up with the letter-writer to probe for their views.

- Candidly discussing reservations in internal letters can help the candidate, because this can clear up concerns when issues are suppressed or only hinted at in the external letters or case statement.
- The department has more power in the review process if its senior faculty write thoughtful, informed internal letters; if they don't write such letters, the external letters can take on extra weight in CAP and the ad hoc committee's deliberations.
- CAP, the FAS Dean, the President and Provost, and other members of the ad hoc committee highly value the internal letters and take seriously what is written in them.

- **We recommend that internal letters do not become part of the associate review process, but we support other ways for departments to get senior faculty to engage strenuously with the associate review process.** As it is already difficult to obtain internal letters in tenure reviews, requiring them in associate reviews would be onerous for faculty. This is discussed further in Section III.B.6.a ("Fuller Information About the Candidate").

D. Teaching, Advising, Mentoring

In this section, we address this question: "How can we more effectively assess teaching, advising, and mentoring in associate reviews and tenure reviews?"

Over the past decade, teaching, advising, and mentoring have gained increased attention in associate reviews and tenure reviews. However, this change has occurred within a tenure-track system that may have been originally designed with different priorities. As the Standing Committee on Women told TTRC, "The current system prioritizes research productivity above other aspects of the case. We see this in the significant role played by the external letter writers, who are generally not in a position to comment on teaching ability or departmental service…. Members of the *ad hoc* committee - who are by definition people from other institutions and other Harvard departments who don't know the candidate - are even less well positioned to evaluate a candidate's contributions to their department or to the university." We receive far more information about research than we do about teaching (for example, a detailed research statement by the candidate as well as internal and external evaluations of their work), reinforcing the long-held and tenacious notion that *teaching doesn't really matter*.

If teaching, advising, and mentoring do indeed matter (as we believe they both should and do), then we recommend elevating this fact in our shared discourse; building into the faculty life-cycle (not just for promotion reviews) opportunities for ongoing feedback and improvement; providing more concrete guidance to tenure-track faculty about how to critically examine and continually improve their teaching, advising, and mentoring for promotion reviews; gathering more complete and objective data from which informed evaluation and decisions can be made; and supporting tenured faculty in their greater engagement with tenure-track colleagues on these issues.

Below, we summarize some major concerns about teaching, advising, and mentoring, followed by TTRC's recommendations. While our discussion focuses on promotion reviews, we note that many of our comments have relevance for all faculty, as all faculty teach, advise, and mentor throughout their careers, not just while they are on the tenure track.[35]

1. Role in Promotion Reviews

We heard from many faculty across the FAS, both tenure-track and tenured, that they are unsure what role teaching, advising, and mentoring play in promotion processes: i.e., to what extent these activities are important, both in themselves and relative to research and service. Additionally, it is unclear what tenure-track faculty are expected to do in each of these areas, and how they can best demonstrate, or others can quantify, "excellence."

For tenure-track faculty, this uncertainty creates anxiety and makes it harder to prepare for promotion. Tenured faculty are also often unsure, which makes it hard for them to effectively mentor tenure-track colleagues. Tenure-track faculty conveyed to TTRC that it was not uncommon for senior colleagues to say that teaching "doesn't matter" in tenure decisions or to provide little advice (and sometimes contradictory advice) about what a good teaching portfolio and/or teaching statement include.

CAP consistently spends a significant amount of time discussing a candidate's teaching, advising, and mentoring; the ad hoc committee pays close attention to these activities as well.[36] Nonetheless, the view prevails among the faculty that teaching, advising, and mentoring are not (very) important.

- **We recommend clear, consistent communication to faculty that teaching, advising, and mentoring are important in the promotion process. This messaging should be in multiple places and aimed at all levels, e.g., tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, and department chairs.**
- **To the extent that this is generalizable, the *relative weights* of teaching/advising/mentoring, research, and service in promotion reviews should be clearly and consistently communicated, so that tenure-track faculty can better prepare for promotion and senior faculty can more effectively mentor (and later evaluate) colleagues. If there are implicit norms for how these**

[35] In reviewing practices (as of August 2021) related to tenure-review assessments of teaching, advising, and mentoring at peer institutions, we learned that Columbia and Yale have similar requirements to Harvard for tenure dossiers (for example, asking for a teaching statement, evaluations, teaching awards, etc.). We did not find publicly available information on Princeton and M.I.T.'s practices. A few peer schools do things that Harvard does not. For instance, Cornell explicitly asks for "Assessments by colleagues of teaching and course materials (e.g., syllabi, project assignments, homework sets, field studies, lab experiments" (see the "Teaching" section in "Guidelines for Tenure Dossiers Submitted to FACTA (Faculty Advisory Committee on Tenure Appointments)," page 3). (Harvard requires syllabi but does not specify other course materials nor request targeted evaluation of those materials.) The University of Michigan "strongly encourage[s] units to develop and utilize teaching portfolios" (see Section 3e in "Checklist for Faculty Promotion Casebook") and provides guidance on these portfolios. Detailed guidance on assembling a longitudinal "teaching dossier" is available on the University of California (Berkeley)'s website, although it is unclear whether or not Berkeley has implemented this recommendation. All of the peer schools we researched, like Harvard, do not seem to clearly differentiate teaching, advising, and mentoring from each other. Overall, TTRC's sense is that our recommendations for improving assessment of teaching, advising, and mentoring would help to create a system that is more rigorous, in many ways, than that of our peers.

[36] As Provost Alan Garber told TTRC, "Teaching is much more important than people think….Teaching won't save you if you have a weak research record. [But] in some cases…teaching has pushed people over the bar."

elements interact, those norms should be made explicit. For instance, if outstanding teaching, advising, and mentoring cannot in themselves earn someone tenure if the research record isn't strong enough, but if they can sometimes push someone over the bar if the candidate's research is on the border, and if poor teaching, advising, and mentoring alone may not break a case but can seriously hurt it, these norms can be stated, to reduce faculty uncertainty. If these are not the norms, appropriate norms should be articulated and shared.

- **To the extent possible, and in as concrete terms as possible, we recommend that expectations for what tenure-track faculty should aim to achieve in teaching, advising, and mentoring should be articulated at the divisional/SEAS and/or FAS-wide level and adopted by all members of the faculty and administration (from department chairs to [assistant] deans to the Provost and President).**
    - These guidelines should strike a balance between being useful and not being prescriptive or construed as an algorithm or contract for promotion (i.e., "If you do X, then you will be promoted.") Variation in how faculty approach these activities and demonstrate excellence is both inevitable and desired.
- **We recommend education on the role of teaching, advising, and mentoring in promotion reviews**, as described above: in writing (e.g., through more explicit guidelines in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and the *FAS Tenure Track Handbook)*; in the annual chairs training (e.g., in a session dedicated to the role of teaching, advising, and mentoring in promotion reviews); in other workshops or seminars for both tenure-track and tenured faculty on navigating the tenure track; in mentoring relationships between senior and junior faculty; and in ongoing messaging within the department.

2. Distinct Categories of Activity and Assessment

In TTRC's outreach to faculty, we learned that across the FAS, teaching, advising, and mentoring are not clearly or consistently differentiated from each other as activities for assessment. In part, this variation is reasonable, given disciplinary differences, especially with regard to advising and mentoring. Even so, some shared understanding at the FAS of what we mean by teaching, advising, and mentoring can help to promote more equitable assessment.

In TTRC's view, teaching, advising, and mentoring are different activities. For example, teaching courses is distinct from the many ways faculty advise undergraduates and graduate students outside of the classroom (e.g., senior thesis advising, concentration advising, advising for affinity groups, Ph.D. advising). Moreover, teaching and advising are both distinct from the professional development/career mentoring of graduate students, TFs, and postdoctoral fellows.

- **We recommend that communications at the departmental, divisional/SEAS, and FAS levels clearly and consistently present teaching, advising, and mentoring as distinct categories of activity and assessment.**
    - As one starting point, clearer definitions of these activities can be provided in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

- Please also see TTRC's recommendation in Section III.D.7 ["Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support"] below, regarding our recommendation that candidates provide separate statements on their teaching, advising, and mentoring.

Even with a shared understanding of what teaching, advising, and mentoring mean, each department will continue to have its own norms of what or "how much" of each of these activities constitutes a typical level of engagement. A sense of these departmental norms is invaluable when promotion reviews move beyond the department to CAP and the ad hoc stage, where evaluators may not have a context for understanding a candidate's engagement.

To provide this context, it would be helpful if the department's case statement in associate reviews and tenure reviews not only discusses the candidate's contributions in teaching, advising, and mentoring, but also provides a sense of how the candidate's activity in these areas compares to that of other departmental colleagues. Please see Section III.D.4 ("Teaching Portfolio") and Section III.D.7 ("Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support") for this and other recommendations about the case statement.

3. Developmental Approach

Most tenure-track faculty come to Harvard with little experience in teaching, advising, and mentoring, and senior faculty also continually improve in these areas.

This inexperience may especially be the case when it comes to advising and mentoring graduate students, TFs, and post-doctoral fellows. In the sciences, the learning curve in these areas is particularly steep, as tenure-track faculty run (sometimes large) labs. We support the efforts of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and others, to strengthen advising and mentoring of trainees. Regardless of discipline, we advocate capturing early and on a regular basis any issues in advising and mentoring relationships, so that the faculty member has the opportunity to learn and improve. This feedback helps not only the faculty member, but also the department, in its ongoing mentoring of the faculty member.

- **We recommend promoting a developmental approach to teaching, advising, and mentoring and, as part of this, normalizing the idea of assessment. We recommend consistently, and to all levels of faculty, communicating that these are learned activities that people can get better at, and assessment is a normal and ongoing part of this.**
- **Information useful for assessment should be gathered early in a tenure-track faculty member's career, on a regular (e.g., annual) basis; in all years, not just in tandem with review processes; and with the express purpose of enabling tenure-track faculty to continually improve.**
- **As part of normalizing assessment, we recommend that explicit opportunities be provided for faculty to report on their evolution and improvement in teaching, advising, and mentoring, and to receive feedback on those changes.**
    - Currently the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* says, for associate reviews and tenure reviews*, "*In the [teaching/advising] statement, the candidate should reflect on

aspects of their professional progression and on how they have addressed any areas of concern."[37] We recommend that the *Handbook* provide more pointed guidance (e.g., "Please discuss what challenges you faced and how you responded to those challenges and/or feedback.") and that it ask candidates to address this question in each of their teaching, advising, and mentoring statements (see Section III.D.7, "Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support," for our recommendation that candidates write separate statements about these activities).

- We also recommend that, in annual assessments of teaching, advising, and mentoring, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* specify a process whereby candidates would provide a statement on how they have responded to challenges and feedback; the department would gather relevant information for assessment; the department would then discuss with the candidate a concrete plan for how the candidate can improve; and the candidate's next annual assessment and/or promotion review would then take as its starting point what the candidate has done in response to that most recent plan, and what their new challenges are.

4. Teaching Portfolio

Several faculty expressed confusion about what types of courses tenure-track faculty should teach, in order to develop what the administration would consider a strong record of teaching excellence. In the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*, the criteria for tenured professor simply say that the candidate should have demonstrated "excellence in teaching" and "teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students."[38] The criteria for associate professor do not mention teaching at all. Moreover, different departments have different teaching responsibilities and cultures, further obscuring what the standard might be for a strong portfolio.

As Amanda Claybaugh, Dean of Undergraduate Education, said, "We have explicit processes and implicit norms that are widely understood" for what constitutes excellence in research in promotion reviews, but "we don't have the same understanding for what we're looking for in the teaching portfolio." Dean Claybaugh said, "Right now, some candidates are teaching very difficult service courses, others are teaching boutique seminars, some are teaching graduate seminars, some not, some chairs come to us and say, is it good or not good for junior faculty to teach Gen Ed – there's no consensus of what a good teaching portfolio should be like."

In general, according to senior leaders, a breadth of teaching experiences is desirable – some representation of small and large courses, undergraduate and graduate courses, and departmental service courses or those that contribute to the FAS's teaching mission outside of the department (e.g., Freshman Seminars or General Education courses). This breadth shows versatility; at the same time, no one person is expected to teach (or excel) in *all* of these formats. Moreover, too much breadth can be

---

[37] Please see Step 3, in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," and Step 3 in Chapter 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor."

[38] Please see "Description: Tenured Professor" in Chapter 4 of the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

counterproductive, as teaching the same course multiple times can help the faculty member to refine the course, develop a track record of improvement, and build a student constituency.

According to senior leaders, a diverse teaching portfolio is important because it (a) provides a fuller picture of the candidates' teaching challenges and strengths, (b) provides a sense of how the candidate may contribute to the department, division/SEAS, or the FAS's teaching mission in the future, and (c) may help to equalize any biases in the system, where, for instance, students may give a high Q score to a small seminar in a subject they are already interested in, whereas they may give a lower Q score in a difficult service course that they are required to take.

Tenure-track faculty report unsettling experiences of learning fairly late in the tenure track (if at all) that, ideally, their teaching record would have demonstrated both breadth and depth. Many colleagues report receiving little to no guidance about what to teach when they first start their tenure-track appointment and little to no help in building enrollment for new courses. In part, this is attributable to good intentions: departments wanting to protect new faculty from large, established, service courses as they build their research portfolio. However, lack of guidance, the loss of opportunity to co-teach with an experienced teacher(s), and the challenges of designing a new course from scratch may come at a cost.

- **We recommend that departments and divisions/SEAS give tenure-track faculty clear and consistent guidance, from the point of hire onward, about what a strong teaching portfolio would look like.** Because teaching needs and norms vary substantially across departments and divisions/SEAS, we support appropriate variations in this guidance. Guidance, however, should include advice on what array of courses (e.g., new vs. repeat courses, small vs. large courses, departmental vs. General Education or Freshman Seminar courses, co-taught or solo-taught courses, etc.) demonstrates both breadth and depth. These expectations should be clearly stated up front, rather than when it is too late for the candidate to change their portfolio.
- **Case statements in promotion reviews should include (1) an explicit statement of what the department's teaching expectations are/were for the tenure-track faculty member, (2) a discussion of how the faculty member was mentored in developing their teaching portfolio, (3) how the faculty member's offerings contribute to the department's stated goals, and (4) for context, how this teaching portfolio compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.**
- **As a complement to the case statement, in their teaching statement the candidate should discuss their viewpoint on the reasoning and process behind the formation of their teaching portfolio.**

5. Teaching Statement

Currently, across the FAS, there is wide variation in the length, content, and overall approach to teaching statements. For associate reviews and tenure reviews, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* provides the following guidance: "A teaching/advising statement…describes the candidate's philosophy and practices related to undergraduate, graduate, and (as relevant) postdoctoral teaching and advising. In the statement, the candidate should reflect on aspects of their professional progression and on how they have addressed any areas of concern."[39]

- **We recommend that much clearer and more detailed guidance for writing a teaching statement be developed and distributed across departments and divisions/SEAS, and be included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.** In particular, we recommend that teaching statements discuss such elements as:
    - As mentioned in Section III.D.4 ("Teaching Portfolio"), how the faculty member assembled their teaching portfolio – i.e., why they taught this particular array of courses.
    - How the faculty member defines effectiveness in classroom teaching and what methods and approaches they use to achieve it.
    - What the objectives were for their courses, and an assessment of whether, and how, they achieved those objectives.
    - How they engage with students at various levels (e.g., first-years, concentrators, graduate students).
    - Any challenges they faced and any modifications made to courses and teaching in response to feedback.
    - Any ways they have actively worked to improve their pedagogy (e.g., attending a teaching workshop, requesting assessment from the Bok Center, etc.).

To the extent that a high-level template for the teaching statement would provide useful guidance without overdetermining candidates' responses, we suggest that such a template could be created and disseminated across the FAS and included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*. We recognize the dangers of over-standardizing the teaching statement, in the interest of letting candidates speak in their own way about their teaching.

6. Evaluating Classroom Teaching: Multiple Metrics

One major challenge in evaluating teaching is that the metrics currently used to assess teaching effectiveness fail to capture, in many people's view, what makes somebody an effective teacher.

In associate and tenure reviews, the Q survey is one of the primary methods used for assessing teaching. However, the Q survey is widely viewed at the FAS as less successful in assessing teaching *effectiveness*, as opposed to student satisfaction, the latter of which may be based on elements (e.g., an instructor's charisma or the course's perceived "difficulty") that do not actually reflect student learning or whether the course fulfilled its objectives. For similar reasons, some institutions[40] have entirely eliminated student-satisfaction surveys from their promotion processes. Other schools have retained their survey

[39] Please see Step 3 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," and Step 3 in Chapter 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor," in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook.*

[40] For example, according to Gillian Pierce, Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, the University of Southern California and the University of Iowa no longer use such surveys in their promotion process.

instruments but have rewritten them, to try to mitigate bias and to map the survey more closely onto what they wish to know about a faculty member's teaching. As Gillian Pierce, Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, told TTRC, "The less targeted and direct a question is, where the student isn't sure what they're answering – those [questions] lead to more bias. 'How did you like your professor?' It doesn't help me evaluate teaching. Or even, 'Overall, how would you rate this instructor?' We don't know what students are answering when they answer this question. So how can we rephrase this or shape the question so students are answering questions about their experience as learners in the classroom, which they're actually equipped to answer."

In lieu of Q scores as the primary metric for evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching, we recommend *both* revising the Q survey and using multiple measures to assess and provide feedback. In keeping with a developmental approach to teaching, evaluation and feedback using multiple measures should occur on a regular basis, and not just at moments of review.

- <u>Q survey</u>**: We support ongoing efforts by the Office of Undergraduate Education and others at Harvard to revise the Q questions and the Q's overall approach, to better assess effectiveness in classroom teaching.**
    - While rewriting the Q survey or developing other FAS-wide measures of course evaluation (which would apply to all faculty, not simply tenure-track faculty) lies outside the remit and expertise of this committee, we nonetheless recommend that the questions on the Q be rewritten to focus on those aspects of teaching that the FAS wishes to prioritize, e.g., student retention of and ability to apply key material, and developing critical modalities of thinking. The revised Q could also possibly be used for midterm evaluation of courses, so that faculty have an opportunity to course-correct for the second half of the semester.
- <u>Peer Observation</u>**: We recommend that peer observation of tenure-track classroom teaching be systematically established as one of the multiple methods for evaluating and providing feedback on teaching.**
    - Based on our understanding (from the Office of Undergraduate Education) of best practices in peer observation, **we recommend that clear, consistent criteria be developed and used to structure peer observations, and that a system be developed for providing feedback to the faculty member.** The criteria and the feedback process should be consistent across the divisions/SEAS. We recommend that the FAS, in partnership with the Office of Undergraduate Education, gather from the literature best practices in implementing peer observation and share those with departments.
    - As it can be difficult for observer and observee alike when colleagues serve as both peer observers for evaluative purposes (in promotion reviews) and informal peer observers who mentor colleagues as they work to improve their teaching, **we recommend that the evaluative and mentoring functions be kept separate, to the extent possible, so that the same person does not serve both functions.**
        - Some universities designate a person or a few people who, for that semester or year, will visit several colleagues' classes and provide evaluation, as a form of

departmental service. There are competing perspectives on what sort of person is best positioned to offer evaluative feedback (e.g, departmental faculty, Bok Center staff, a third-party observer, etc.). As this question is best addressed by those with expertise in teaching evaluation, we would simply note that not all senior faculty are necessarily the best teachers or would be best positioned to deliver this feedback.

- <u>Teaching Materials and Pedagogical Approaches:</u> **In addition to Q evaluations and peer observation of classroom teaching, we underscore the importance of looking at the course in its totality, including reviewing the faculty member's syllabi, course materials, and pedagogical approaches.** We recommend reinforcing this idea and reflecting in review practices that assessment of classroom teaching goes beyond the person's performance as a lecturer or discussion leader (and especially beyond their performance in just one lecture in one class).
    - As appropriate, teaching materials could also include a live link to a course website, which can sometimes provide a fuller picture of the course, or student work that helps to illustrate the learning objectives of a course.
- **Other best practices for evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching should be gathered, standardized as appropriate, and circulated across the FAS.**

Please also see Section 8 ("Support for Tenured Faculty") below, where we reiterate some of the recommendations from Section III.B.7 ("Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews") regarding strengthening feedback in all areas (research, teaching, advising, mentoring, and service) after associate reviews. In Section 8, we also reiterate some recommendations from Section III.B ("Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews"), regarding support for tenured faculty on running successful associate reviews and tenure reviews.

7. Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support

In Section III.D.2 ("Distinct Categories of Activity and Assessment"), we noted that teaching, advising, and mentoring are often lumped together in how faculty think, talk about, and assess these activities. Advising and mentoring are distinct from each other (and from classroom teaching).

Departments can vary in how they assess advising and mentoring, in part because of departmental culture and practice.

The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* provides this guidance on gathering feedback on the candidate's advising and mentoring: "To gather advisee feedback on advising/mentoring, which should be summarized in the case statement, the department chair (or their designee) either speaks with or writes to the candidate's current and former students and, as relevant, postdoctoral fellows, including those who have moved to another group. If the feedback takes written form, the chair should make clear that the emails or letters will be kept confidential and advisees' names will be redacted (as is also the case with oral feedback) before the emails or letters are shared with committee members (although the dean or her designee may request any information regarding the case if questions arise). The emails or letters should not be included in the dossier."[41]

Some departments conducting promotion reviews solicit feedback from some advisees/mentees, while other departments solicit all advisees/mentees. Some departments may cite a few comments in their case statements, while others may cite many (or all) comments. Some departments provide excerpts that are anonymized to protect the author's identity (as the *Handbook* instructs), and others include comments in their entirety. Variations such as these create inconsistencies across cases.

In addition, different forms of bias can affect student and researcher feedback on a faculty member's advising and mentoring (as well as teaching; please see Section III.D.6 above, "Evaluating Classroom Teaching: Multiple Metrics"). In academia at large, gender and racial bias has been well documented in evaluations of teaching, advising, and mentoring.[42] Furthermore, assessment of advising and mentorship, in particular, necessarily involves small numbers. Among those small numbers, those who are most disgruntled may have the loudest voice or, alternatively, others with legitimate concerns may be too afraid to give feedback at all.

Another salient issue is that the advising and mentoring workload is often disproportionately borne by women and minorities. Yet this effort is not always seen or recognized in departmental assessments. As the Standing Committee on Women notes, "many women and faculty of minoritized genders, especially faculty of color, perform 'invisible labor' in the form of additional student advising and mentoring…. Given that this type of informal, labor-intensive support and mentoring is essential service to the institution and its most vulnerable students, it should be recorded, counted, and acknowledged."[43]

There is growing concern among faculty that, even as advising and mentorship are rightly being more valued by the administration, the way we assess advising and mentoring is lacking.

Our recommendations below are aimed at distinguishing advising and mentoring from each other (and from teaching), strengthening how advising and mentoring are assessed (including more standardized efforts that can help to reduce bias), and increasing the visibility and value of faculty members' contributions in these areas.

[41] Please see Step 5 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position."
[42] For example, the Standing Committee on Women notes, "The many studies on this topic include: Kristina M. W. Mitchell and Jonathan Martin, 'Gender Bias in Student Evaluations,' *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 3 (July 2018): 648–52, https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909651800001X."
[43]For example, the Standing Committee on Women cites this article: Amani El-Alayli, Ashley A. Hansen-Brown, and Michelle Ceynar, "Dancing Backwards in High Heels: Female Professors Experience More Work Demands and Special Favor Requests, Particularly from Academically Entitled Students," *Sex Roles* 79, no. 3 (August 1, 2018): 136–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0872-6.

- <u>Advising and Mentoring Statements:</u> **We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* explicitly state that, for associate reviews and tenure reviews, the candidate should include (in addition to the teaching statement) a statement on mentoring and a separate statement on advising, both of which would include a discussion of their philosophy/approach and their record of achievement. Guidance for writing the advising statement and mentoring statement should be developed and included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*, communicated across departments and divisions/SEAS, and, critically, shared with new tenure-track faculty from the start of their appointment, so that they can start to collect relevant information and have a framework for thinking about their development.** We recommend that these statements contain such elements as:

  - In the advising statement, a description of the candidate's work with undergraduate and graduate students outside the parameters of a formal course (e.g., senior thesis advising, concentration advising, advising for affinity groups, Ph.D. advising).
  - In the mentoring statement, a description of the candidate's work with trainees and others to foster their professional development and provide guidance on their careers.
  - In each of the two statements:
    - a discussion of the faculty member's approach and objectives in advising or mentoring, and an assessment of whether, and how, they achieved those objectives
    - a discussion of how the faculty member engages with students and/or trainees at various levels (e.g., undergraduates, graduate students, TFs, postdoctoral fellows)
    - a description of any challenges they faced and any modifications in their approach to, respectively, advising or mentoring, in response to feedback
    - comments on any other ways they have actively worked to improve their advising or mentoring (e.g., attending workshops, talking with senior colleagues, etc.)

- <u>Gathering Advisee Feedback:</u> **We recommend that the methods for gathering feedback about a tenure-track faculty member's effectiveness as an adviser/mentor of undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows be deployed at regular intervals, standardized (to the extent possible), strengthened, and implemented in all departments.** In particular:
  - Feedback should be gathered early in the tenure track and on a regular basis (such as every two years), not only in tandem with review processes, and with the purpose of enabling tenure-track faculty to make continuous improvements up to and beyond the tenure review.
  - Information-gathering must preserve the anonymity of the trainees involved. It could be conducted via anonymous surveying or via meetings conducted by a neutral figure (other than the PI).
  - **For promotion reviews (at the very least), to ensure greater consistency across departments in the types of information that are gathered in assessments, we recommend the creation of template emails (that may differ) that can be sent to,**

respectively, undergraduate, graduate student, and postdoctoral fellow advisees/mentees.
- These emails would include a set of topics or questions designed to elicit specific and, to the extent possible, objective information on how the tenure-track faculty member performed as an advisor/mentor.
- These topics/questions could include both those that are divisionally/SEAS consistent and those particular to the department and/or that are developed in consultation with the tenure-track faculty member.
- Rather than open-ended, vague or subjective questions that elicit whether an advisee/mentee "liked" their advisor/mentor, questions should, where possible, elicit concrete measures: e.g., "How often did your advisor/mentor meet with you?" "Did your advisor talk to you about job placement and applying for jobs?" "Did you succeed in getting a job, and if so, where?" Etc.

- **We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* continue to require that a summary of advisee/mentee feedback be included in the case statement, but that the *Handbook* also now require that the advisee/mentee letters in their entirety (suitably anonymized) be included in the dossier seen by CAP and the ad hoc.** This approach continues to protect advisees'/mentees' identity by only making summaries available to the department, while providing more complete information than before to CAP and the ad hoc.
- **We also recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask departments to include in the case statement an explanation of what their process was for obtaining advisee/mentee feedback.** This information can help the divisional dean/SEAS Dean, CAP, and the ad hoc committee spot any unintentional biases reflected in the information before them.
- **Case statements should also indicate how the candidate's advising load and mentoring load compare to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.**

Please also see Section 8 ("Support for Tenured Faculty") below.

8. Support for Tenured Faculty

With the approach to teaching, advising, and mentoring described in Sections 1 through 7 above, TTRC recognizes that more is being asked of tenured faculty than has previously been the case:

- More, and ongoing, attention to tenure-track colleagues' development in these areas, from the start of their appointment onward;
- More communication about what teaching, advising, and mentoring are, their relative weights in promotion reviews, what specifically is expected of tenure-track faculty in each of these areas, and the developmental nature of these activities;
- More mentoring of tenure-track colleagues in developing their teaching portfolio and writing their teaching, advising, and mentoring statements;
- More engagement through, for example, peer observation;

- More systematic gathering of feedback to aid assessment;
- And fuller reflection on teaching, advising, and mentoring in the case statement.

It is only fair that this expanded role for tenured faculty be accompanied by more support and training.

Please see Section III.B ("Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews"), for our discussion of enhanced feedback and training for tenured faculty on running successful associate reviews and tenure reviews (including assessment of teaching, advising, and mentoring). Therein, we recommended enhanced communication about best practices in running reviews, and more critical feedback from CAP and the deans after the associate and tenure reviews to both the candidate and the department, so that both the candidate and the department can improve.

In addition, please see Section III.B.7 ("Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews") for recommendations on more concrete, actionable feedback to candidates following a review. Therein, we noted that a revised template for the letter sent to candidates after their associate review can help the department to articulate specific ways that the candidate can improve in all areas (including teaching, advising, and mentoring). We noted the importance of honest and specific feedback on teaching, advising, and mentoring at this stage, given the developmental approach we are advocating for these activities. We also recommended that an in-person meeting between the candidate and the review committee (not only the chair) be required after the review, to further facilitate feedback and feed-forward from a collective group, rather than a single individual.

E. Service

1. Role in Promotion Reviews

a) The *Handbook* View of Service

In the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* service is minimally defined, and little guidance is provided for how, in promotion reviews, the candidate should explain their service and how the department, CAP, and the ad hoc should evaluate that service.

For example, for associate reviews and tenure reviews, candidates are not asked to submit any materials specifically about service. The department is asked to address service in the case statement, but the *Handbook* guidance is simply, **"**Please describe the candidate's service to the department and broader academic community."[44] In the case statement for tenure reviews, the department is asked to "Please describe the candidate's service to the department, School, University, and broader academic community."[45]

The official "Description" of the associate professor rank does not mention service: "An associate professorship is a tenure-track appointment held by individuals who have demonstrated sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major research institution within three to five

[44] Please see Step 11 in Chapter 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor."
[45] Please see Step 11 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position."

years."[46] The "Description" of tenured professors does mention service: "The foremost criteria for appointment are: scholarly achievement and impact on the field, evidence of intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, potential for future accomplishments, teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students, and the individual's potential contributions to the University and broader scholarly communities."[47]

b) What is Service?

For the purposes of this report, and in its overall review of the tenure-track system, TTRC defines service as faculty members' contributions to committees and other forms of citizenship at the departmental, FAS, and University levels, as well as to the broader community (i.e., academic and sometimes non-academic). For example, University service may include membership on graduate admissions, seminar, or search committees, and community service may include membership on a council, editorial board, or an award selection committee. As such, TTRC views service as distinct from the advising and mentoring discussed in Section III.D ("Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring"). Advising and mentoring are often lumped into the largely undefined term "service." However, as we discussed in Section III.D, advising and mentoring are distinct activities – not only from each other (and from teaching), but also, now, from "service."

What service "is" at the FAS is further made murky by the fact that departmental cultures vary in their views, and different disciplines have different service opportunities.

Departments also vary in the guidance they give to tenure-track faculty about what their service load "should" be. They vary, too, in their practices: some departments shield tenure-track faculty from most or all service while they are on the tenure track, while other departments rely on all faculty (tenure-track and tenured alike) to participate in service activities. This variation across (and within) departments makes it difficult for CAP, for instance, to assess service for promotion reviews, as it is not always clear what a department's typical service load is. Having such a context would help CAP to better assess the candidate's contributions.

As we have discussed elsewhere in this report, some evidence suggests that service is disproportionally carried by women and faculty of color. All the more, it is important for there to be clear and consistent FAS guidance for how tenure-track faculty and departments report service, and for there to be clarity on the role of those contributions in promotion reviews. In Section III.D ("Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring"), TTRC recommended that the relative weights of teaching, advising, mentoring, research, and service in promotion reviews be more clearly articulated. In addition, we offer the recommendations below.

2. Recommendations

- **We recommend that, to the extent possible, and in as concrete terms as possible, expectations for what tenure-track faculty should aim to achieve in the realm of service**

[46] Please see Chapter 5, Section 2, "Descriptions: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Convertible Instructor."
[47] Please see Chapter 4, "Description: Tenured Professor."

should be articulated at the divisional/SEAS and/or FAS-wide level and adopted by all members of the faculty and administration (from department chairs to [assistant] deans to the Provost and President).

- **We recommend that tenure-track faculty submit a "service statement" as part of their promotion materials (for associate reviews and tenure reviews), and that clear and detailed guidance for writing such a statement be developed and distributed across divisions/SEAS and/or the FAS, and be included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.**

  This statement allows tenure-track faculty to fully explain their contributions, rather than relying on the review committee chair to glean their service from their curriculum vitae or other sources. The separateness of this statement also signals the importance of service at the FAS and its distinctness from other activities such as advising and mentoring. Service statements could include such elements as:

  - A clear, chronological listing of committee (and other) service at the departmental, FAS, and University levels. In addition, a listing of other contributions to the broader academic and, as appropriate, non-academic communities.
  - A discussion of the departmental guidance the tenure-track faculty member received, with regard to developing as a citizen of the department, FAS, University, and beyond.
  - A discussion of any challenges the faculty member faced in developing as a citizen, and any modifications they made in response to feedback.

  To the extent that a high-level template for the service statement would provide useful guidance without overdetermining candidates' responses, we suggest that such a template could be created and disseminated across the FAS and included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*. We recognize the dangers of over-standardizing the service statement, in the interest of letting candidates speak in their own way about their service.

- **We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask departments to include in the case statement (for associate reviews and tenure reviews): a) a discussion of the guidance they gave the candidate in developing as a citizen, and b) an indication of how the candidate's service load compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.**

F. Covid-19

Any discussion of the tenure-track system at this time must acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic life. From the start of Harvard's campus shutdown in March 2020 to the tentative return to full campus life in Fall 2021, every aspect of academic life has been disrupted and refashioned. Faculty have transitioned to working from home while, in many cases, juggling family responsibilities; have scrambled to salvage or reframe their research endeavors while dealing with limited campus access and travel bans; have renovated their courses and teaching style in an unprecedented remote-teaching experiment; have advised and mentored students and researchers, often with greater intensity than before, due to the stresses of the pandemic; and have attempted to fulfill their service responsibilities and to participate in Harvard's communal life while being, in pandemic parlance, "alone together."

In this section, we summarize some ways that the pandemic has impacted the productivity of tenure-track faculty, and we suggest some ways that promotion processes can take that impact into account.

1. Impact on Academic Development and Achievement

Some tenure-track faculty wonder how the pandemic will be "taken into account" in promotion reviews. One colleague said, "Last year was my first year [at Harvard], this is my second year, and in the era of Covid, it feels very strange. I was basically in my office for a semester until all this happened….[W]hen it eventually is time to review my tenure case, I'm anxious about how Covid will be thought of and remembered….Will it be like, Covid was 10 years ago, so, oh well – or will it be like, actually, that was really, really disruptive, and things were crazy?"

The Standing Committee on Women (SCW) reminds us that there may be a differential impact on research productivity: "Studies have indicated that the pandemic has already had a negative impact on women scholars' rate of publication.[5] ….Research can also suffer from the combined effects of increased caregiving, increased service, increased teaching loads (not usually in course loads, but in repurposing and redesigning for online), loss of quiet time and space to work undisturbed, and the already-documented effects of this political moment on concentration and mental health.[6]""[48]

The SCW notes, "There is some indication that duties such as childcare, supervising children's online learning, and organizing family life in quarantine or lockdown have fallen disproportionately to women."[49]

Some colleagues state that supporting students and others through advising and mentoring has been especially time-consuming and intense due to the pandemic. Not only has the number of contact hours risen per advisee for some faculty, the intensity (i.e., the tenor) of the advising has also changed. Moreover, disparities in advising and mentoring loads compound as the number of contact hours per advisee rises. For example, if in pre-pandemic times, one faculty member advised five students (say, for a total of five hours per week) and another faculty member advised 10 students (for a total of 10

---

[48] Footnote 5 in the SCW's letter to the TTRC stated, "Between February and May, 2020, women in academia submitted fewer manuscripts for publication than their male colleagues, and fewer compared to the same time frame in 2018. See Flaminio Squazzoni et al., 'No Tickets for Women in the COVID-19 Race? A Study on Manuscript Submissions and Reviews in 2347 Elsevier Journals during the Pandemic,' SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, October 16, 2020), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3712813.'"
Footnote 6 in the SCW's letter cited, "Beth McMurtrie, 'The Pandemic Is Dragging On. Professors Are Burning Out.', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 6, 2020, sec. News, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-pandemic-is-dragging-on-professors-are-burning-out."
[49] Footnote 2 in the SCW's letter to the TTRC cited "Jillian Kramer, 'The Virus Moved Female Faculty to the Brink. Will Universities Help?,' *The New York Times*, October 6, 2020, sec. Science, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/science/covid-universities-women.html."

hours per week), there is a five-hour difference between the two faculty members. However, during the pandemic, the doubling of one's contact hours with each advisee would amount to a 10-hour difference between the two faculty members. In short, the disparity between those with an average load and those with a higher-than-average load (e.g., often women and minorities) has widened even further.

The pandemic has also affected mentoring relationships that might ordinarily develop between senior and junior colleagues. As one tenure-track faculty member said, "the capacity to interface and receive mentorship with senior faculty is much diminished. I don't run into people in the hallway. It's not like, 'can we grab a coffee and talk about this paper I'm putting together, because I could really use your expertise or perspective.' There's a tremendous feeling of disconnect that I'm struggling with right now."

Networking with colleagues outside of Harvard has also been constrained. One tenure-track faculty member said, "What I've been told about letter writers is, it's not enough to publish papers, I should also talk to specific people about those papers that I'm publishing, and this would help me to get my work out there. This pandemic has been very productive for me, because I could stay at home, not traveling, and work and publish papers, but it has added a huge additional stress, which is that I don't have so many opportunities to talk to the people I've been told to talk to. I have been giving virtual talks, but you never know who will be there or who will not be there. It's hard to replace the interaction with a person."

Evaluating faculty members' record for promotion reviews, when the entire academic enterprise has been transformed by the pandemic, is complicated, to say the least. Fair evaluation is complicated further by the varying impact the pandemic has had on individual faculty – relative to the type of research they do, the types of classes they teach, or their home responsibilities, for example. It seems fair to say that a constant, for all faculty, is that every aspect of their professional lives, to say nothing of their personal lives, has been affected in some way by the pandemic.

2. Current Measures

The AY 2021-2022 *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* describes several measures that the FAS put in place between Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 to address the effects of the pandemic on tenure-track faculty. These measures included appointment extensions and postponements of promotion reviews, teaching relief, language that tenure-track faculty could use in their c.v.s[50] to explain the timing of their promotion review, and explicit new instructions (to both internal Harvard evaluators and to

[50] Step 3 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," states, "Note: Candidates who opted in Spring 2020 and/or Spring 2021 for an extension of their tenure clock due to the COVID-19 pandemic may include the following language in their c.v.s, if they wish: "Due to substantive disruptions to scholarship, teaching and advising, and service for all FAS tenure-track faculty, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Harvard University delayed my tenure review by [CHOOSE ONE: two years/one year/six months] [INCLUDE IF APPROPRIATE: and gave me one course of teaching relief]."

external letter writers[51]), specifying that candidates should not be penalized for any appointment extensions or teaching relief they received due to the pandemic.

For example, for tenure reviews, the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* says:

> "Note: With the significant disruptions to professional life resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, the FAS instituted in Spring 2020 a policy of extensions, allowing then-current tenure-track faculty the option of extending their appointment and postponing their promotion review for one semester or a year, depending on their eligibility. Similarly, FAS faculty whose appointments began in the fall term of 2020 were offered the option to extend their initial appointment by one year. In Spring 2021, recognizing the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the FAS encouraged any interested tenure-track faculty to contact their divisional dean/SEAS Dean if they wished to

[51] Chapter 15.G, the "Sample Tenure Review Letter" to external letter writers, states, "[INSERT AS NEEDED: "With regard to the timing of this promotion review, please note that, with the significant disruptions to professional life resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, the FAS instituted in 2020 and 2021 policies giving tenure-track faculty the option of appointment extensions and a term of teaching relief. In keeping with these policies, Professor (NAME) was given a (CHOOSE ONE: two-year/one-year/six-month) appointment extension (INSERT AS NEEDED: and a term of teaching relief). Evaluators should assess Professor [NAME]'s aggregated scholarship, teaching and advising, and service without any penalty for having received an appointment extension [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief], due to the pandemic. As Professor [NAME] was given a [CHOOSE ONE: two-year/one-year/six-month] extension and thus came up for tenure in the [CHOOSE ONE: ninth/eighth/seventh and a half] (rather than the ordinary seventh) year after their initial appointment date, their body of work should be evaluated according to a standard of someone who has had seven years to work towards tenure. All of the work that Professor [NAME] has done since the start of their appointment is evaluated as if they have done so on a clock unaffected by the pandemic. [INSERT AS NEEDED: Similarly, regarding teaching relief, Professor (NAME) should have their scholarship, teaching and advising, and service evaluated as if they had taught the course for which they received relief.] COVID-related clock extensions [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief] should not be counted against candidates in any way."]

Chapter 15.H, the "Sample Letter to External Letter Writers for Promotion to Associate Professor," states, "[INSERT AS NEEDED: "With regard to the timing of this promotion review, please note that, with the significant disruptions to professional life resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, the FAS instituted in 2020 and 2021 policies giving tenure-track faculty the option of appointment extensions and a term of teaching relief. In keeping with these policies, Professor (NAME) was given a (CHOOSE ONE: two-year/one-year/six-month) appointment extension (INSERT AS NEEDED: and a term of teaching relief). Evaluators should assess Professor [NAME]'s aggregated scholarship, teaching and advising, and service without any penalty for having received an appointment extension [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief], due to the pandemic. As Professor [NAME] was given a [CHOOSE ONE: two-year/one-year/six-month] extension and thus came up for associate promotion in the [CHOOSE ONE: sixth/fifth/fourth and a half] (rather than the ordinary fourth) year after their initial appointment date, their body of work should be evaluated according to a standard of someone who has had four years to work towards associate promotion. All the work that Professor [NAME] has done since the start of their appointment is evaluated as if they have done so on a clock unaffected by the pandemic. [INSERT AS NEEDED: Similarly, regarding teaching relief, Professor (NAME) should have their scholarship, teaching and advising, and service evaluated as if they had taught the course for which they received relief.] COVID-related clock extensions [INSERT AS NEEDED: and teaching relief] should not be counted against candidates in any way."]"

> request an additional year of appointment and tenure-clock extension, for reasons of significant professional and/or personal disruption due to the pandemic.
>
> In addition, the FAS will grant relief from teaching one course for any interested tenure-track colleagues (regardless of dependent-care circumstances) who were on the FAS tenure-track during the 2020-21 academic year and who teach in departments/areas that have a typical teaching load of two courses or more per year. Please see 3.E.3, "Additional Leave and Teaching Relief," for more information on this one-time teaching relief.
>
> Internal and external evaluators in tenure reviews should evaluate candidates by using the standard criteria for tenure provided in Chapter 4A (the "Description" of tenured professors). These criteria were in use before the COVID-19 pandemic and have remained unchanged. Evaluators should assess a faculty member's aggregated scholarship, teaching and advising, and service without any penalty if the faculty member took an appointment extension and/or teaching relief as provided to eligible tenure-track faculty due to the pandemic. For example, if a candidate for tenure was given a one-year clock extension and thus came up for tenure in the eighth (rather than the ordinary seventh) year after their initial appointment date, their body of work should be evaluated according to a standard of someone who has had seven years to work towards tenure. All of the work the faculty member has done since they were initially appointed is evaluated as if they have done so on a clock unaffected by the pandemic. Every candidate who has had a pandemic-related extension would receive an adjustment of the type described here, taking into account the specific clock extension they received (e.g., one semester, one year, etc.). Teaching relief granted due to the pandemic works under the same principle. A tenure-track faculty member who was given one course of teaching relief should have their scholarship, teaching and advising, and service evaluated for tenure as if they had taught the course for which they received relief. These procedures imply that COVID-related clock extensions and/or teaching relief should not be counted against candidates in any way."[52]

For associate reviews, the *Handbook* states the same language as above, adjusting the third paragraph to refer to the associate professor criteria and the timing of associate reviews:

> "Internal and external evaluators in associate reviews should evaluate candidates by using the standard criteria for associate professor provided in Chapter 5 (the "Description" of associate professors). These criteria were in use before the COVID-19 pandemic and have remained unchanged. Evaluators should assess a faculty member's aggregated scholarship, teaching and advising, and service without any penalty if the faculty member took an appointment extension and/or teaching relief as provided to eligible tenure-track faculty due to the pandemic. For example, if a candidate for promotion to associate professor was given a one-year clock extension and thus came up for associate promotion in the fifth (rather than the ordinary fourth) year after their initial appointment date, their body of work should be evaluated according to a standard of someone who has had four years to work towards associate

[52] See Step 1 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position."

> promotion. All of the work the faculty member has done since they were initially appointed is evaluated as if they have done so on a clock unaffected by the pandemic. Every candidate who has had a pandemic-related extension would receive an adjustment of the type described here, taking into account the specific clock extension they received (e.g., one semester, one year, etc.). Teaching relief granted due to the pandemic works under the same principle. A tenure-track faculty member who was given one course of teaching relief should have their scholarship, teaching and advising, and service evaluated for associate promotion as if they had taught the course for which they received relief. These procedures imply that COVID-related clock extensions and/or teaching relief should not be counted against candidates in any way."[53]

The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* also describes a term of backstopped research leave that was made available to tenure-track faculty.[54] In addition, when requesting an additional appointment extension that was made available to tenure-track faculty in Spring 2021, faculty were given the opportunity to discuss at greater length how Covid-19 had impacted their productivity and personal life. As Dean Nina Zipser's April 7, 2021 email to faculty said, "To help your divisional dean/SEAS Dean understand the context for your appointment-extension request, you may revisit, if you like, your 2020 Faculty Activity Report (FAR), to update any answer you provided to this question: "[Optional] Please list any work-related activities that had to be postponed or cancelled in calendar year 2020 due to COVID, such as: 1) any research projects, and 2) talks, other events, etc." We know that when you originally answered this question, it was not in the context of an appointment-extension request. You may also, if you wish, comment on any personal disruptions due to COVID."

While optional extensions are valuable, whether for COVID or other life events, it is also important to recognize these bear a cost, namely a delay in a typical salary increase associated with promotion. Importantly, this delay can have a compounding financial impact over subsequent years.

Overall, TTRC considers the measures described above to be helpful. They attempt to clearly situate (for internal and external evaluators) tenure-track faculty productivity within the context of the pandemic, and they provide faculty with much-needed flexibility.

3. Recommendations

We recommend that the FAS continue to remain alert to ways that tenure track policies and processes can thoroughly take into account, and reflect, the impact of COVID-19 on colleagues' ability to

[53] See Step 1 in Chapter 5.B.2, "Internal Promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor."

[54] Chapter 3.E.3 "Additional Leave and Teaching Relief," in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook,* states, "In Spring 2021, the FAS instituted the following measures as part of its ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To further support tenure-track colleagues who were on the FAS tenure track and had children at home aged 12 or under during the 2020-2021 academic year and who are teaching three or more classes a year, the FAS will backstop the faculty member's application for an additional term of research leave. That is, in addition to the terms of paid research leave to which tenure-track faculty are already entitled, if colleagues make a good-faith effort to apply for an external fellowship to receive salary support—as is standard practice when faculty take a term of unpaid leave to conduct research—the FAS will backstop the application if the faculty member does not secure a fellowship. (This measure is intended to apply to a single fellowship application, not multiple applications.) This opportunity will also be open, upon request, to tenure-track faculty teaching three or more classes a year who have other dependent-care concerns, such as caring for elders."

conduct their research, teach, advise, and mentor, perform service, and otherwise develop as members of the Harvard community.

To further contextualize faculty members' record, we recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask faculty undergoing associate reviews and tenure reviews to submit with their dossier materials a short statement describing how, if at all, Covid has affected them professionally (and/or personally). We recommend that the FAS require such statements for all candidates for the next seven years.

As the Standing Committee on Women noted, "The pandemic will have repercussions for years to come. Therefore, tenure profiles should not be measured just in time lost during 2020-22, but also in decreased research output for several years after that. There will be many rolling effects to contend with: children with long-term learning needs created by inadequate schooling and social development during this period, long-term health impacts, the needs of additional mentoring for graduate students moving through our programs whose work has been delayed and who will face a drastically straitened job market, potentially sweeping changes to our profession and the shape of the public humanities that may demand that projects be rethought and courses redesigned; and finally, the problem of research leaves that had to be cancelled or modified (see above). There are also long-term financial consequences for faculty with spouses who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic."

G. The Ad Hoc Process

In this section, we return to a topic first mentioned at the start of our discussion of the tenure-track system (see Section III.A.1, "The Lived Experience of the Tenure Track System"): the ad hoc process. While the ad hoc process is outside of TTRC's immediate charge, we wish to address it here for two reasons. First, our colleagues' concerns are strong and widespread. Second, the ultimate success of the tenure-track system is highly reliant on alignment in the ways we assess tenure cases at all levels – from the department to CAP to the ad hoc. We feel it is imperative to ensure that the criteria for assessment are similar at all levels, even if evaluators at each of these steps have access to (slightly) different information (e.g., internal letters first seen at CAP, and witness testimony and external experts' views at the ad hoc), and even if they necessarily view the cases through their own lenses (i.e., with the perspectives of the department, the FAS, and the University).

To explore these issues, we first discuss TTRC's remit below, followed by an examination of faculty concerns and some University comments on the issues. We then discuss the relationship between CAP and the ad hoc. To the extent that our remit allows, TTRC then offers some suggestions for moving forward.

President Bacow and Provost Garber hosted a December 2020 town hall for faculty to discuss the ad hoc process. Provost Garber and Senior Vice Provost Singer also met separately with TTRC, and Senior Vice Provost Singer met individually with TTRC as well. TTRC appreciates these leaders' willingness to discuss the ad hoc process.

1. TTRC's Remit

TTRC was charged with examining the tenure-track process that occurs within the FAS (i.e., associate review and tenure review processes at the departmental and CAP levels). Our charge provides some latitude for exploring other issues, but still within the FAS: "If, in its work, the committee identifies other aspects of FAS policy and procedure in pressing need of review, it has latitude to explore those issues."

The ad hoc process overseen by the President or Provost is technically beyond TTRC's remit. At the December 2020 town hall hosted by President Bacow and Provost Garber, a recently tenured FAS colleague asked whether the ad hoc process could be included in TTRC's charge. While sympathetic to colleagues' concerns about the ad hoc process, President Bacow said, "It's part of a University process that applies to the other Schools, so it is separate from the work of the Tenure Track Review Committee."

Faculty have expressed disappointment to TTRC that our charge does not include review of the ad hoc process. For example:

- **A tenure-track colleague said:** "I find the committee's limited charge to be inadequate. Any review of the system without consideration of its most mysterious, most consequential, and unchecked step – namely the ad hoc committee – seems to me strangely self-defeating. I am a faculty member on the tenure track, and several of my most devoted mentors have told me they no longer know how to guide me through the system. They make this admission, painfully, due to the fact that their own best efforts to tenure highly qualified candidates have failed precisely at the ad hoc phase. As you well know, they have no access to the reasoning behind the committee's decisions and so have little idea how to change their own practices. In such a circumstance, examining flaws within the lower rungs of the process may seem to be at least some kind of attempt to evaluate things, but whatever may be discovered may not even be at the root of recent failed cases. We have no way of determining if any reform that is suggested will make a difference since the final and most important stage of the process remains beyond scrutiny."
- **A tenured colleague said:** "It seems to me that cases which pass through the various stages of FAS review (and especially CAP) with flying colours,[55] yet are rejected after the ad-hoc meeting by the provost or president for unspecified reasons, are almost destined to provoke crises of confidence within the faculty. These crises of confidence are deeply corrosive to our intellectual community, to the faculty's ability to provide accurate mentoring and advising counsel to tenure-track colleagues, and to faculty engagement with hiring and review writ large. (In the

[55] As a point of clarification, whether or not a case passes CAP "with flying colors" is in fact unknown to the department, as tenure-review processes do not include a step where CAP debriefs the department after its review of a case. Most cases that move from CAP to an ad hoc (as opposed to being approved *without* an ad hoc) do so because CAP had reservations and recommended that additional information would be helpful in making a final decision. These points are described in more detail in Section III.G.5 ("CAP and the Ad Hoc").

> wake of several high-profile tenure denials in 2019, I have heard, for example, several senior faculty make statements like 'I'm never going to serve on a search committee again' or 'I'm never going to serve on a tenure review committee again,' expressing frustration that the significant amount of work involved in these service assignments, and the conclusions reached by the expert scholars closest to the candidates' fields, can be overturned without explanation.) The overall effect of current practices is polarizing in a way that strikes me as deeply unproductive – and unnecessary to the task of ensuring that Harvard maintains a world-class faculty of intellectual leaders in their respective disciplines. As a result, I am disappointed that these critical matters – how the ad hoc committee is composed, what role it plays in the later stages of the evaluative process, and how the two individuals at the very top of the University hierarchy go about making final tenure decisions (a practice one could characterize as 'monarchical') – have been excluded from consideration."

TTRC recognizes the limits on its ability to effect change in the ad hoc process. However, given our colleagues' concerns about the ad hoc, we felt it was important to discuss the ad hoc in our committee meetings, with a particular focus on how best to align criteria at each evaluative step, how to facilitate more feedback to the department after each step, and how to more generally share concerns to help inform future deliberations about the ad hoc process.

2. What is the Ad Hoc?

a) *Handbook* Description of the Ad Hoc

The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* provides this description of the ad hoc process:

"This review usually, but not exclusively or necessarily, takes the form of an *ad hoc* committee, presided over by the President or the Provost. An *ad hoc* review is one aspect of the decision-making process. The President or Provost may also consult with internal and external scholars who are not involved in the *ad hoc* review to provide greater context for the President's deliberations. In order to protect the candidate and the integrity of the process, all aspects of the President's deliberations, including the timing and the type of *ad hoc*, are strictly confidential.

If the President decides to convene an *ad hoc* committee, it is assembled by the divisional dean and the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity. The committee ordinarily consists of three active, full professors from outside Harvard, two active, tenured professors at Harvard (from a department other than the one making the recommendation), the President or Provost, the Edgerley Family Dean of the FAS, the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and the divisional dean responsible for the case. When appropriate, an external member may be a prestigious senior researcher from a corporation or research institute, a well-established artist, or a renowned curator. The committee ordinarily hears from three to four faculty witnesses, including the department chair, the search committee chair, and other faculty. The candidate's former undergraduate or graduate thesis advisors or postdoctoral advisors should not ordinarily serve as witnesses.

Note: External letter writers typically do not serve on the *ad hoc* committee, although experts who sent no, or little, response to a department's request for a letter may be considered. In exceptional cases, the department can include in its *ad hoc* committee recommendations someone who has already submitted a substantive letter.

After evaluating all of the information gathered throughout the process, the President makes the final decision regarding all tenure appointments that are forwarded to him for review and writes a letter with his decision to the Edgerley Family Dean of the FAS."[56]

b) Why We Have Ad Hocs

In the December 2020 town hall on ad hocs, President Bacow cited two reasons why extra-departmental and extra-School bodies such as the ad hoc committee exist in tenure processes: "At every institution, tenure decisions are viewed at the institutional level, beyond the departmental and School decision. Why is that the case? Why not accept the decisions of those closest to the subject matter? First, tenure is not granted by the department or the School, it's granted by the University. It's a University commitment and decision to grant an appointment without limitation of time, to devote resources to sustain the appointment, and to protect the academic freedom of the individual. Tenure is a way to ensure scholars have the freedom to pursue their scholarly interests. Second, to ensure departments do not become too insular, self-referential, are constantly open to new ideas, and are not just reinforcing those that exist within. "

Provost Garber added, "For context, throughout Harvard, in other Schools, basically all of them have an ad hoc committee part of the process. For most Schools, the process is very similar to that in FAS, including external committee members as well as internal members."

3. The "Black Box" of the Ad Hoc

As mentioned in Section III.A.1 ("The Lived Experience of the Tenure Track System"), faculty told TTRC that their primary concern about ad hocs is that faculty do not know what happens at this stage of the process and what the ad hoc committee's reasoning is for granting or denying tenure in any given case. This lack of transparency has a chain of consequences, as briefly mentioned in Section III.A.1. and outlined again below.

Because little feedback about what happened in the ad hoc stage gets back to the department after a tenure case is decided, tenured faculty report that they lack information that can help them to more effectively mentor other tenure-track colleagues. Because such cases then contribute to a sense that the tenure-review process is random and unpredictable, some tenured faculty reported that they did not feel they could encourage prospective tenure-track faculty to come to Harvard. This has implications for

[56] Please see Steps 14 and 15 in Chapter 4.A.2,"Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position."

the intellectual fortitude and diversity of the FAS faculty. It also erodes faculty trust in the tenure-track system.

A December 2019 letter shared with TTRC, from 107 faculty members to Dean Gay, Provost Alan Garber, and President Bacow, commented on this chain of events and also pointed out a disconnect between the intense surveillance in the earlier stages of the tenure-review process and the closed lens in the ad hoc stage.[57]

Likewise, a letter to TTRC with 51 faculty signatories described the chain of consequences above and said, “At the ad hoc itself, in the name of ‘confidentiality’ after the last department witness has departed, the doors are closed and a star chamber ensues in which members of the ad hoc may level criticisms that no member of the department has heard or could anticipate. There is no opportunity whatsoever to answer these criticisms. In short, if the ad hoc is negative, the prosecution gets the last word, not the defense. The defense can’t even hear the last word.”

Faculty told TTRC that the lack of feedback breeds distrust – not only in the tenure-track system, but between people.

- The Standing Committee on Women said, “we believe the [ad hoc] committee's complete lack of transparency makes it difficult to know what the criteria for tenure actually are, and as a result reduces trust in the process. Even assuming that the committee operates in good faith (as its members surely do), decisions may seem capricious when viewed from the outside, as no explanation is ever given.”

---

[57] “[S]ince the stakes of denying [tenure] are so high, candidates for tenure and their home departments deserve greater transparency and accountability about the rationale behind the decision, which is made by the President, usually in consultation with the Provost. There is a disconnect at work here. The tenure process’s early stages are elaborate and collective: a department’s senior faculty, informed by the written opinions of 12-20 leading scholars in the candidate’s specific field(s), generate a detailed report on the candidate and vote on whether the case should proceed. The middle stages bring cross-departmental consistency and a bird’s-eye view to those reports and votes, with all cases, whether in physics or philosophy, evaluated by the FAS Committee on Appointments and Promotions. But the final stage, often yet not always featuring an adhoc committee whose composition is secret and chosen at the Provost’s discretion, is a black box. From that black box emerges a yes or a no. And nothing else.

That disconnect poses several problems, beyond the fact that the administrators who make the final decisions are not the ones who must manage the front-line consequences of those decisions. If senior faculty are told nothing about why a valued tenure-track colleague was denied tenure, we are unable to effectively advise or mentor other tenure-track faculty seeking advice on how to thrive here – and the administration’s increased emphasis on mentorship has been a hallmark of recent efforts to foster inclusion. If we do not have reliable information about the basis on which any particular case is denied, then we cannot in good conscience encourage new tenure-track faculty to join Harvard’s ranks, since we cannot offer them our confidence that their superlative research, teaching, and service will be appropriately rewarded. Entrenched and secretive institutional practices, moreover, are liable to favor established disciplinary boundaries over the emerging, interdisciplinary fields best situated to help us understand our contemporary world.

All this undermines the original goal of instituting a tenure track, and it also risks undermining the University’s stated commitment to diversity, inclusion, and belonging.”

- The 51 faculty signatories mentioned above said: "Tenured faculty familiar with multiple cases in their own departments…as well as in other departments, cannot begin to give themselves an explanation, let alone explain to untenured colleagues, why some cases for promotion succeeded and others did not. *Many* faculty therefore remain unconvinced—often utterly unconvinced—that the highest quality untenured faculty are promoted and the lowest quality denied tenure….In short, there is no faith or trust in the current system."
- One tenured faculty member said, "Should more feedback be provided to the faculty (e.g., especially in the cases in which an Ad Hoc/President rejects a case that had had strong department support)? This is basically a question of trust: can the department faculty be trusted to hold in confidence information that is shared by the President or Provost? The current answer to that question is 'no.' Maybe this is justified; I assume there have been cases in which some information was shared and then spread more widely than intended. But is that inevitable? What are the conditions that have fostered this breakdown of trust? Could sufficient trust be established such that the President could share meaningful information with the department faculty? I would hope that that is a solvable problem."

In addition to concerns about the lack of feedback, and as touched on in some of the comments above, some faculty would like to know who the ad hoc committee members are and wondered how the external members are chosen.

Below, we share some University viewpoints on these concerns.

4. University Viewpoints

a) Opening the Black Box

At the December 2020 town hall, President Bacow provided some more information about what happens at ad hoc committee meetings. For example, he noted:

- The ad hoc committee meeting is chaired by President Bacow or Provost Garber. Regardless of who chairs the meeting, President Bacow and Provost Garber make sure to discuss the case with each other. The President reads every case, whether or not he chairs the committee. The ad hoc committee is an advisory body to the President and Provost. The final decision on tenure cases rests with the President.
- Also present at these meetings are FAS Dean Gay, the relevant divisional dean/SEAS Dean, Senior Vice Provost Singer, and usually five other members (this number can vary): typically, three external members and two members from Harvard. These members are typically chosen because they come from fields or departments where they have subject-matter expertise in the case being reviewed.
- The meeting starts in Executive Session, to lay out ground rules and explain that witnesses will be coming in. Witnesses are not asked to make statements, but to answer questions from the committee. In the Executive Session, committee members may raise questions they want to ask

witnesses and decide who will ask the first question. This rotates, so that the same person isn't always asking the first question.

- There are typically three (and sometimes four) witnesses: the department chair, review committee chair, and one other faculty member from the department. Each witness typically "testifies" (answers questions) for at least 30 minutes.
- After the witnesses testify, another Executive Session occurs. The group discusses what they have learned. President Bacow does not ask people to vote, but to say what they've learned in the process of the ad hoc meeting—what surprised them, what new information they received, how they think differently about the case, what their overall view of the case is. That conversation can go on for some time.
- President Bacow then spends some time with the deans and with Senior Vice Provost Singer, discussing what they have learned. The President will talk with Provost Garber and may consult individually afterwards with members of the ad hoc committee or members of the department.

b) Confidentiality

Regarding ad hoc committee membership, Senior Vice Provost Singer and Provost Garber commented on how external members are chosen.[58] Of the committee overall, Senior Vice Provost Singer said, "We also strive for diversity in the ad hoc membership, and a balance of internal and external expertise. For ad hocs for women and minorities, we're especially attentive to diversity questions."

Regarding the confidentiality of the ad hoc membership and, more broadly, the lack of feedback to departments about ad hoc deliberations, President Bacow and Provost Garber cited the importance of confidentiality.

President Bacow and Provost Garber said that confidentiality is essential to ensure that people will participate, and it also encourages honest feedback. President Bacow said, "We rely on the goodwill of the individuals willing to participate in the process. If they were identified in advance, publicly, such that they would take public responsibility for a decision Harvard colleagues might not like, they might not want to serve. So we try to make it clear, the ad hoc decision is not a decision of the committee. We're asking them for their input, advice, but we take responsibility for the decision, not them. So it's done to

[58]Provost Garber said, "Every effort is made to get external members with relevant expertise. Sometimes they may not be in the exact area of the candidate. If a search is broader, sometimes we want people who can speak to a broader range of research. We have many safeguards in place to ensure people don't have known prejudices." Senior Vice Provost Singer said: "The department submits 2 lists: people external to Harvard and internal to Harvard. The department has the option of including people who shouldn't be invited, and to explain the rationale. Sometimes divisional deans will identify some external people with expertise, and for internal people, the divisional deans and I have a lot of knowledge of faculty. External letter writers who decline to write because they don't have time are often a source of names….Occasionally, we use publicly available lists from professional societies, etc. With a list of names, we work with the divisional dean's office to evaluate—is each person tenurable at Harvard? We try to rule out conflicts of interest: coauthors, mentors, etc. We'd never keep someone who had a public record of antipathy towards the person."

protect them, to get them to serve willingly, and to avoid any lobbying before the meeting. That results in a lack of transparency but also a more honest conversation in the room and better input into decisions. As for what one says to [tenure-track] colleagues about the process – it's a process known to us before we enter. When we sign up to be faculty, junior faculty, we agree to be judged by a process that's not guaranteed to be perfectly transparent. Junior colleagues also aren't part of the conversation within departments and aren't informed about the individual opinions of those colleagues. Same with CAP – they're not privy to what goes on within CAP. So there's a tension between the desire for transparency and the desire for people participating in the process in a way that won't expose them to pressure, the public, etc., to ensure serious, honest assessment of the case."

Provost Garber agreed: "Candor is central to this process. When you're trying to evaluate a candidate and are faced with letters or conversations where people are holding back, you're left trying to guess what they really meant to say. The process works best when, at every step of the process, there's candor and an impartial assessment of the candidate's work and qualifications. Candor does require this kind of confidentiality that does run against the desire to have transparency. It's a difficult tradeoff."

President Bacow and Provost Garber did not think that more feedback could be given to departments about ad hoc deliberations. President Bacow said, **"**As for feedback – it's very difficult to give just a little feedback. It invites more and then invites opening up the process in ways that lay bare divisions in departments, divisions in fields, in not necessarily helpful ways." Provost Garber said, "[W]hat you're asking for is very fair, but it's hard to see a way to make it work."

c) Education

Provost Garber said that while confidentiality prevents the system from providing more feedback to departments, more education about the tenure track process can clear up misconceptions, help departments to present cases in the most effective ways, and in so doing, make outcomes more predictable.

When Provost Garber and Senior Vice Provost Singer met with TTRC, Provost Garber said, **"**It's almost impossible to give detailed feedback without violating confidentiality. What would be really helpful is building on something already done at FAS – have more workshops on the tenure track process….the target audience for the workshops isn't just junior faculty, it's senior faculty who will be sitting in judgment on their colleagues. I try to reinforce, you should be candid, honest in your evaluations. People don't seem to believe that. You need to be candid with us, but also with your junior faculty. All of us have been junior faculty at one time, and it's an incredibly stressful period in life, when you know you'll be up for tenure. No system will remove the anxiety, but we should do what we can to make it more predictable so people don't feel they're dealing with moving goalposts or a capricious process. We should think about how to better educate both junior and senior faculty….There's a lot we can do to dispel myths. And do it repeatedly. We have new cohorts coming in. Don't just deliver messages once."

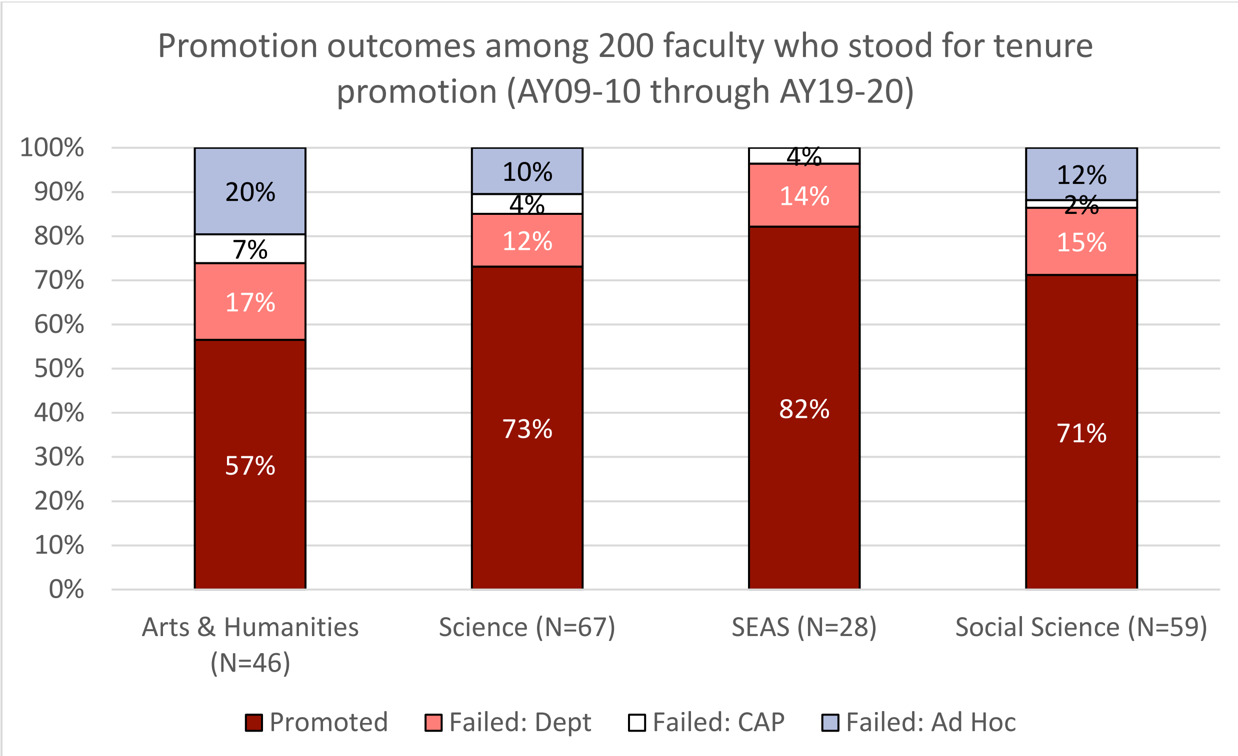
Senior Vice Provost Singer agreed, noting that understanding of the tenure track process seems to vary across departments: “[W]hy there’s a comparand list, how seriously quibbles can become big because of how people write letters, why we’re looking for a breadth of views, why we want strong comparand lists – if you can help [departments] understand those things, everything will be better up the chain. There’s a lack of trust, but also a lack of understanding. Trust is hard to build, but we can make progress in terms of understanding.”

5. CAP and the Ad Hoc

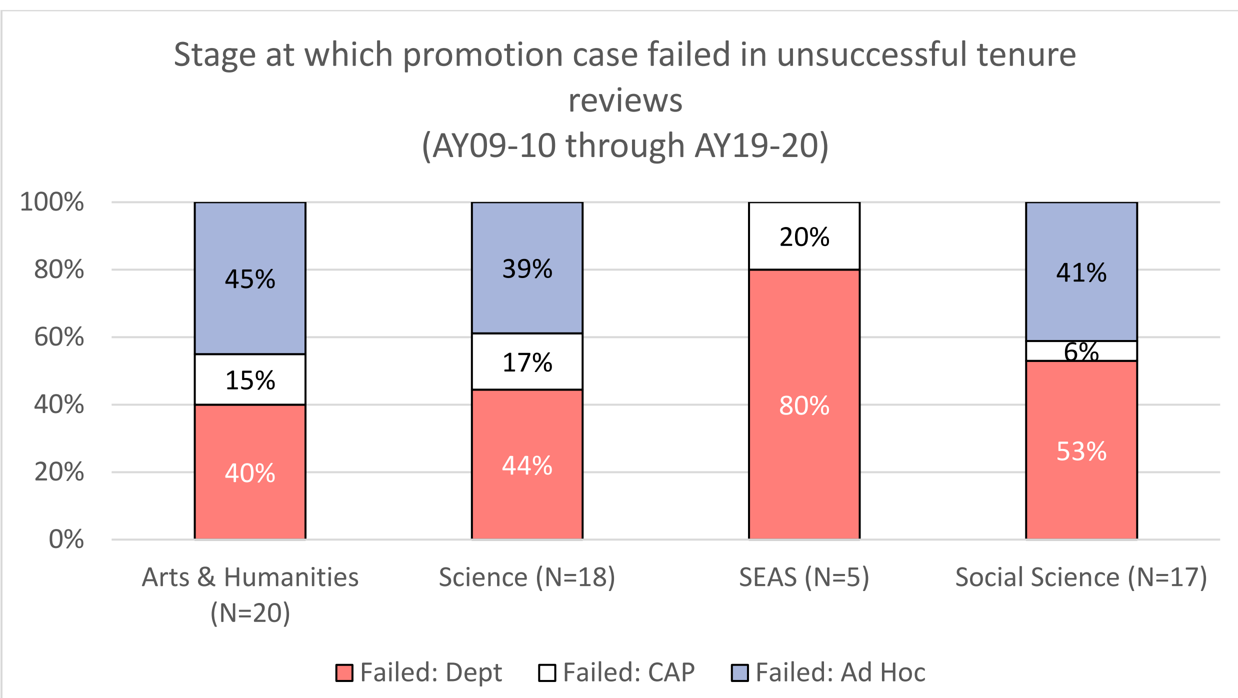
Provost Garber, President Bacow, Senior Vice Provost Singer, and CAP members told TTRC that, while much dismay in unsuccessful tenure cases is directed towards the ad hoc committee, in the vast majority of cases, reservations about the case have been expressed at the CAP and departmental levels as well. In reality, only a small number of cases feature overwhelming support through the departmental and CAP stages, followed by an unexpected about-face at the ad hoc stage. Of the 83 cases (between AY 2009-2010 and AY 2019-2020) in which CAP recommended tenure with no ad hoc, the President/Provost convened an ad hoc (against the recommendation of CAP) in only six cases (7%). Of those six, only two cases were ultimately unsuccessful. In other words, in 97.5% of cases, when CAP recommends tenure with no reservations, the President comes to the same conclusion and tenure is granted. In the 80 cases in which CAP recommended an ad hoc review (i.e., CAP had some reservations and/or thought additional information and discussion would be useful), 76 cases went to an ad hoc, and of those 76, 21 cases were unsuccessful, which equates to a success rate of 74% (59 of 80 cases). CAP members confirmed to TTRC that CAP may send a case to the ad hoc committee when CAP feels that an additional perspective and more information is needed to reach a final decision on the case. If the case is ultimately turned down, faculty may think that it was an unqualified “yes” at the CAP level, and a “no” at the ad hoc level, but that is not always the case (see below).

Provost Garber also emphasized that the same criteria are used throughout each stage of the tenure-review process. “There’s no separate set of criteria at the ad hoc level. This is true for every School at Harvard. The ad hoc committee is told about Schools’ criteria. They’re given the language and are charged with interpreting that language as part of the review. So it’s not about separate criteria….it’s about the ambiguity about what constitutes sufficient impact and quality. And it’s not entirely predictable how that’ll be interpreted in each case. If we look around the country, I haven’t heard of any university where people felt they had the perfect approach to making these judgements. These are inherently difficult judgements. Reasonable people will sometimes disagree.”

The graph below shows, by division, the promotion outcomes for the 200 faculty who stood for promotion reviews from AY 2009-2010 through AY 2019-2020. As the graph shows, there are some differences by division/SEAS. However, in all divisions/SEAS, the majority of candidates are ultimately promoted, and a much smaller fraction of cases fails at the ad hoc stage.



In addition, as the graph below shows, of the tenure-promotion cases that failed in AY 2009-2010 through AY 2020, SEAS differs from the divisions, in that it denies promotion at the departmental level at a higher rate and has no failed cases at the ad hoc level. This may indicate a willingness to select out at the earlier stage cases that might not be successful if they progressed to later stages of review.



TTRC discussed whether, in theory, it would make sense to shift more of the decision-making power in tenure cases from the ad hoc stage to CAP. At present, CAP is empowered to make only *recommendations*, which largely come in three forms: CAP recommends that the case (1) move forward with no ad hoc (i.e., the dossier is sufficiently strong that additional information or evaluation is unlikely to change the outcome); (2) move forward with an ad hoc (i.e., the dossier is strong, but there are reservations, and/or additional information or evaluation is needed to make a more informed final decision); or (3) not move forward, and with no ad hoc (i.e., the dossier has significant weaknesses, and additional information or evaluation is unlikely to change the case).

In the past 11 years, 171 tenure cases came through CAP. CAP recommended that the case move forward without an ad hoc in 83 instances (48.5%). They recommended that the case move forward with an ad hoc review in 80 instances (46.8%), and they recommended that the case be denied in only eight (4.7%) instances.

Ultimately, TTRC's view is that, to the extent that people are unhappy with a tenure decision because they feel appropriate standards weren't applied or that people less knowledgeable than departmental colleagues made the decision, shifting the decision-point to CAP would not alleviate this concern. Departments who overwhelmingly supported tenure for their colleague would likely be dissatisfied whether the turn-down occurred at the CAP or the ad hoc stage. CAP's relative closeness to the department, compared to the President and Provost, might also make it harder for them to turn down a tenure case.

Moreover, TTRC notes that there is a standard structure for the feedback that the FAS Dean gives to the ad hoc committee, summarizing CAP's deliberations. This structure – which includes addressing the candidate's appointment history, research, publications, the external letters, teaching and advising, who attended the CAP meeting, a summary of major issues discussed at CAP, and CAP's recommendation – suggests to TTRC that CAP has ample room to inform and advise the ad hoc committee, does not give a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down, and that, indeed, the FAS wields substantial influence in the tenure-review process. This fact, if more widely known, may help alleviate faculty concerns about any disproportionate power on the part of the ad hoc committee.

Overall, TTRC heard positive comments about CAP. However, this may be, in part, driven by less than 5% of cases being denied at the level of CAP.

As one recently tenured colleague said, "CAP strikes me as not random and not arbitrary. And very strong. CAP is the part of the process that I admire the most, that I am most keen to participate in and that makes me feel, there we have an engine, because it's colleagues and deans….The other element that inspires my confidence is, it's a hybrid group of deans and faculty. And it's rotating, so you take it on as part of your university service. It seems like the kind of thing where people who were on CAP for a long time or for a term would see many cases, and they'd have a broad-based experience of what files look like in different fields. So there's a reservoir of knowledge to draw on."

Another tenured colleague noted that CAP provides a useful check-and-balance: "There…[are] clear cases where departments – either small departments with a small number of faculty to control the thinking, or big departments who defer to a small number of faculty who dominate the case – where they don't necessarily, either positively or negatively…giv[e] the candidate a fair analysis. So I think some system of checks and balances is a good thing. It also encourages departments to fly straight and makes sure they're absolutely fair in their evaluation."

At the same time, some faculty still do not quite understand what happens at CAP. In recent years, CAP has held sessions for ladder faculty called "Demystifying CAP." These sessions have largely drawn favorable responses. However, understanding how CAP works may not yet be widespread. One faculty member said, "From what I've seen, talking to [a CAP member], and going to the 'Demystifying CAP' meetings, it does seem like a very thoughtful procedure." But because not all senior colleagues understand how CAP works, "when they advise us, they're doing it from a perspective of 'just their best guess' of how CAP will behave. So the end effect is random, even if within the universe of CAP it is thoughtful."

6. Moving Forward

Overall, taking into consideration all of the information at its disposal, TTRC's view is that faculty concerns are legitimate, regarding the negative effects of a lack of transparency and feedback from the ad hoc process. At the same time, we understand the importance of confidentiality, to encourage people to serve on ad hoc committees and to ensure honest discussion.

With the understanding that it is beyond TTRC's charge to recommend changes to the ad hoc process, we suggest the following, in the interest of future dialogue on this subject. We recognize that repairing frayed trust in the tenure-track system, and between colleagues, cannot be achieved easily, through any recommendations.

We recommend that the University consider examining the ad hoc process, with an eye towards assessing whether any productive changes can be made to increase (within reason and with due concern for confidentiality) transparency about its processes and the feedback that is provided to departments after tenure cases.

We recommend a careful, confidential examination of CAP's and the ad hoc's reasoning in an appropriate sample of past tenure cases denied at the ad hoc stage, to gain a better sense of any patterns in these two bodies' aligned or else discrepant reasoning. As appropriate, we recommend sharing general findings with the FAS faculty as a way to further educate faculty and restore confidence in their ability to mentor tenure-track colleagues. Our simple analysis of outcomes (as noted in Section III.G.5, "CAP and the Ad Hoc," and Section III.G.1, "TTRC's Remit") suggests there is indeed very little disagreement between CAP and the ad hoc. We note a common misconception that when CAP moves a case forward, this does not necessarily mean they enthusiastically recommend the cases for approval, and, indeed, they can have strong reservations. Nonetheless, this exercise may identify ways in which criteria that are assessed in CAP and then in the ad hoc can be better aligned.

We recommend that CAP consider sharing, to the extent possible, its general recommendation on each tenure case – that is, the strengths and weaknesses of the case – with the department chair and

the tenure review committee chair. This will help to increase transparency in the process and, in some cases, help prepare departments for a possible negative outcome.

We recommend that CAP continue its efforts to educate faculty about what happens at the CAP stage of the review process.

We recommend continued education for tenure-track and tenured faculty about how the tenure-track process works and best practices (as mentioned throughout this report) in preparing candidates for promotion and effectively presenting promotion cases.

President Bacow and Provost Garber spoke frankly about the difficult experience of turning down a tenure case.

President Bacow said of tenure decisions: "This is the most important thing we do. We don't like turning cases back. But it does come with the territory, and when we do it, we do it reluctantly, understanding the impact this has on the candidate and the department and the institution. We've made enormous investments in the lives of our younger faculty. We want them to succeed. But there are times when we make a judgment it's in the best long-term interest of the institution."

Provost Garber said, "In my role, the most difficult decision is to deny tenure, especially when it's a promotion from within. It's partly painful because we know any pain we feel is nothing compared to the department colleagues and the candidate him or herself. It's the worst kind of decision we need to make."

President Bacow made a closing point at the December 2020 town hall: "You have our pledge: We take this work as seriously as we do anything. There's nothing more important. A university is its faculty. Our job as senior administrators is to enable you to do your best work. To provide you with a rich environment with great students and great colleagues. So everything we try to do is towards that end. We appreciate the time and effort you put into this. We want people to succeed, but we also want Harvard to be the best place it can be. Our collective job is to enhance the scholarly reputation of the institution. We won't always agree on how to do it. But I hope we recognize that disagreements are honest ones."

IV. Collected Recommendations

In this section, we collect all of the bold-faced recommendations that were made in Sections III.B through III.G of the report.

A. Associate Reviews and Tenure Reviews (From Section III.B)

<u>Time to Tenure and Associate Tenure</u>

A1. Ultimately, we recommend maintaining the current length of the associate professor term.

A2. We also recommend continuing to tenure only at the full professor rank.

What is the Purpose of the Associate Review?

A3. We recommend making the associate review significantly more rigorous in terms of feedback, to truly help the candidate to prepare for tenure, without any advance expectation of whether this will lower or increase the selection rate.

Aligning the Associate Review, Tenure Review, and 2nd-Year Review

A4. We strongly recommend that the associate review be treated as a thorough rehearsal for a possible tenure review. While the standards for success in the two reviews are of course different, aligning the tasks and criteria, to the extent that is reasonable and possible, will make the tenure-track system more internally coherent, will conserve and compound, rather than dissipate, effort and information from one review to the next, and will help the candidate and department to prepare more effectively for a tenure review.

A5. While the 2nd-year review is technically beyond TTRC's charge, we recommend that the 2nd-year review, which seems to be inconsistently implemented across departments, be required in all departments (with accountability to the relevant divisional dean's/SEAS Dean's office), and that it be made more rigorous and more deliberately aligned with the associate review and similarly focused on feedback.

A6. If we truly wish to give tenure-track colleagues useful feedback in their reviews that will help them prepare for the next level of advancement, we encourage departments to normalize the idea and practice of both positive and critical assessment of candidates, not only during their associate review, but as early as the 2nd-year review.

A7. We encourage departments to adopt the stance of evaluators rather than advocates.

A8. Communication: Broadly outlined, we recommend:

- At the outset of associate reviews and tenure reviews, a more robust line of communication between the department and the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and CAP, about best practices in running successful associate reviews and tenure reviews
- During reviews, targeted exchanges between the candidate and review committee and between the department chair, review committee, and divisional dean/SEAS Dean
- After the associate review, more systematic feedback from the department to the candidate on strengths and areas for improvement; and from the divisional dean/CAP subcommittee to the department, highlighting weaknesses in the presentation of the case (i.e., the dossier) that should be addressed before the tenure review
- After tenure reviews, more feedback from CAP to the department, to help the department prepare strong cases in the future.

Criteria for Associate Promotion

A9. One of the most effective ways to strengthen associate reviews is to modify the criteria for associate promotion. We recommend changing the criteria from "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major institution within three to five years" to "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years."

In tandem with this change, we recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers include not only the associate-promotion criteria, but also Harvard's tenure criteria.

We also recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers ask whether the candidate should be tenured *now* at Harvard.

A10. We recommend that this difference between Harvard tenuring at full and other schools tenuring at associate and full be made more clear in the template used for writing to external letter-writers.

Defining the Field

In addition to changing the associate promotion criteria, a second way to strengthen associate reviews is to provide significantly more support to candidates and departments in defining the candidate's field and in developing widespread understanding of the field.

A11. First, we recommend greater engagement between the review committee chair, department chair, and divisional dean/SEAS Dean in formulating and reviewing the definition of the candidate's field (and also in developing and reviewing the list of external letter writers and, for tenure cases, the comparand list).

A12. Second, to help ensure accuracy in defining the field, to support the candidate's own learning curve in explaining their field, and to promote broader understanding of the field, we recommend building structured opportunities into review processes for candidates to provide input on their field.

- We recommend that candidates be required to address in their research statement how they define their field and what they see as their impact in their subfield, field, and adjacent fields.
- We recommend that departments develop structured ways for candidates to regularly present their work to the department. We also recommend that the FAS continue to develop opportunities for candidates to present their work beyond their department – both across Harvard and at other institutions.

A13. Third, we recommend that the candidate and department's work of defining the field ideally start in the 2nd-year review, and certainly in preparation for the associate review and the tenure review. This would enable the candidate and the department to become well-versed in the candidate's work and field over time, and for that understanding to inform their respective tasks in promotion reviews. This is one important way that the associate review, at the very least, can be treated as a rehearsal for the tenure review.

A14. Fourth, to continue, rather than begin again from scratch, a department's learning curve about a candidate's field, we recommend that procedures be worked out to allow appropriate information about a candidate's field-definition to be shared from the associate review to the tenure review (and, as appropriate, from the 2nd-year review to the associate review).

A15. Fifth, to further acknowledge the special challenges of scholars working in smaller, emerging, and/or interdisciplinary fields – or more broadly, in any cases where the department lacks a faculty member with expertise in the candidate's field – we recommend two additional measures:

- That departments identify such cases as early as possible in the tenure track (and certainly before the associate review), so that the department can put in place ways to support the candidate, and
- If there is a faculty member from a neighboring FAS department or another Harvard School who is expert in the candidate's field, we recommend that they be brought on in a mentoring capacity to the tenure-track faculty member, well before the associate review, and we recommend specifying in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* that they should be asked to serve on any eventual ad hoc committee.

Information about the Candidate

A16. Feedback from previous reviews: We recommend that the official feedback letter that the candidate received from their 2nd-year review or associate review be shared in an appropriate form with the, respectively, departmental associate review committee or departmental tenure committee, to provide some context for understanding how the candidate has developed in the past few years.

A17. Input from the candidate: We recommend that there be opportunities for the review committee, upon preliminary review of the candidate's materials, to seek clarification from the candidate, if needed, so that the candidate can directly answer any questions and prevent any confusion. We recommend that any such interchange occur during a defined, early period of the review process, and that the window then close for further communication between the candidate and review committee, to protect the confidentiality of the department's review process.

A18. Internal letters: We recommend that internal letters by departmental faculty do not become part of the associate review process, but we support other ways for departments to get senior faculty to engage strenuously with this review.

A19. We recommend more systematic methods of collecting information about the candidate, to reduce bias, create more consistency across cases, and to generate more useful feedback for the department and, after the review, the candidate.

Preparing Candidates for Reviews and Feedback to Candidates After Reviews

A20. Given the importance of frank, full feedback to candidates after the associate review, we recommend the following:

- We recommend that structures and incentives be developed for departments and candidates to search actively for areas for improvement during associate reviews, engage directly with those weaknesses over the course of the review process, and develop customized mentoring to help address these issues.
- To improve the quality of feedback candidates receive after their associate review, we recommend that a stronger template for the associate review letter be created and used across the FAS. This can generate more useful feedback for the candidate and help to standardize a level of quality in the feedback across the departments and divisions/SEAS.
- We recommend that, in addition to the official letter from the divisional dean to the candidate after their associate review, an in-person meeting between the candidate and the review committee be required, where the candidate can receive not only feedback, but also "feed-forward": i.e., specific advice for developing their research (and its impact), teaching/advising/mentoring, service, statements for their dossier, and any other aspects of their work for the tenure stage.

A21. We recommend the continuation and/or revival of departmental mentoring programs for tenure-track faculty, required across the FAS. We support an approach of mentoring early and throughout the tenure-track process, not just at review points.

A22. We recommend the creation of materials at the departmental, divisional/SEAS, and/or FAS level that can help to structure and support departmental mentoring in a consistent way, as appropriate.

A23. To create more consistent mentoring efforts across departments, we recommend that a brief description of the department's mentoring approach to the candidate be included in the case statement for associate reviews and tenure reviews.

A24. Please see Section III.C ("External Letters and Internal Letters") for a recommendation that internal letter-writers be asked to comment on the department's mentoring of the candidate and the internal letter-writer's own role (if any) in mentoring the candidate.

A25. We recommend the development of a formal mentoring system for women and minority faculty, pairing tenure-track faculty with respected faculty members outside the department.

A26. We recommend a series of divisional/SEAS and/or FAS trainings for all tenure-track faculty to help them prepare for their associate review and tenure review.

B. External Letters and Internal Letters (From Section III.C)

Number of External Letters

B1. For tenure reviews, we recommend reducing the required number of external letters from 12-15 to 10. We also recommend stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that some flexibility in the number of letters is allowed, provided that the review committee makes a strong case (first to the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and then in the case statement) for their departure from the required number of letters.

Letter Writers

B2. For tenure reviews, we recommend allowing some flexibility in the "full professor" requirement for external letter writers, provided that the review committee makes a strong case (first to the divisional dean/SEAS Dean and then in the case statement) for their departure from the norm.

B3. For tenure reviews, we recommend stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that external letter-writers do not themselves need to be viewed as tenurable at Harvard or need to currently be from peer institutions. We also recommend that the *Handbook* state what, if any, the requirements are for including international colleagues on recipient lists.

B4. For tenure reviews, we recommend allowing review committees to solicit two or three "external" letters from relevant scholars within Harvard (i.e., tenured faculty from other FAS departments, or from centers, or from other Harvard Schools), as appropriate, and subject to approval by the divisional dean/SEAS Dean. These letters should not count toward the ten required external letters, but instead act to supplement the external evaluations.

B5. To more broadly include valuable feedback from faculty whose closer relationships with the candidate currently exclude them from serving as letter writers, we recommend allowing departments to solicit external letters from collaborators and past mentors (whether within or outside of Harvard). These letters should be held in a separate category and not count toward the ten required external letters, but instead act to supplement the external evaluations.

B6. To better align the associate review with the tenure review –in particular, to provide a better sense of the candidate's trajectory over time and whether, or how, they addressed any issues that came up in their associate review – we recommend that a subset of external letter-writers from the associate review also write external letters for the candidate's tenure review.

B7. Given the recommendations above that grant more flexibility in, and expand, who can be a letter-writer, we recommend underscoring in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* that clear justification for each letter writer, and for the list as a whole, should be provided during divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval of the list, as well as in the case statement.

B8. In interdisciplinary fields, we recommend that the review committee be allowed to write to two (or more, as necessary) different groups of external letter-writers, with two (or more, as necessary) different comparand lists, as appropriate.

B9. We recommend clarifying a common misunderstanding by stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere that writing an external letter does not disqualify someone from serving on an ad hoc committee, and we recommend explicitly noting that the departmental strategy of not asking someone to write an external letter, in an effort to "save" them for the ad hoc, is counterproductive (and decreases the opportunity to get the most relevant information at the earliest stage), as potential ad hoc members are often identified by looking at the list of people who were solicited to write an external letter.

Comparand Lists

B10. We recommend maintaining the current number of comparands (i.e., "four to five") in tenure reviews.

B11. We recommend that, when appropriate, non-tenured scholars should be eligible for inclusion on comparand lists.

B12. We recommend underscoring in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* the importance of a clear rationale in the case statement for each comparand and the list as a whole.[59]

B13. We recommend engaging letter-writers' input to a greater degree, in creating a set of comparands. Harvard's comparand list can be presented to letter writers as a suggested starting-point, subject to substitutions or additions that the external letter-writer thinks would create the most appropriate comparison group.

B14. In interdisciplinary fields, we recommend that the review committee be allowed to write to two (or more, as necessary) different groups of external letter-writers, with two (or more, as necessary) different comparand lists, as appropriate.

Template for Letter to External Letter Writers

B15. One of the most effective ways to strengthen associate reviews is to modify the criteria for associate promotion. We recommend changing the criteria from "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major institution within three to five years" to "sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at Harvard within three to five years."

In tandem with this change, we recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers include not only the associate-promotion criteria, but also Harvard's tenure criteria.

[59] Currently, Step 11 in Chapter 4.A.2, "Internal Promotion to Tenured Professor from a Tenure-Track Position," states, "Comparands: Provide a list of names, home institutions, and links to each comparand's home page, with a brief rationale for each comparand. Explain how this comparand list represents an appropriate range of career experience and reflects an appropriately broad definition of the field."

We also recommend that Harvard's letter to external letter-writers ask whether the candidate should be tenured *now* at Harvard.

B16. We recommend that the candidate's "teaching/advising statement" be removed from the materials that are sent to letter writers, so that letter writers do not feel compelled to comment on areas that they may not be qualified or have enough information to comment on.

B17. The template letter to external letter writers (for both associate reviews and tenure reviews) should pose questions to the letter writer that elicit <u>specifics</u>.

B18. In addition to the template's standard request to all letter-writers, the template should include a place for the review committee to ask customized questions, subject to divisional dean/SEAS Dean approval.

B19. For associate reviews and tenure reviews, the template should circumscribe the letter-writer's task, to make clear what is being asked of them, to reduce the perception of undue burden, and to hopefully preempt their declining to write.

B20. To further remove obstacles to securing external feedback, we recommend that if a scholar declines to write a letter due to a busy schedule, and their evaluation is deemed essential, either the committee chair or a neutral party (e.g., an assistant dean) should be allowed to take the expert's evaluation by phone.

<u>Internal Letters</u>

B21. For those departments with less robust cultures of departmental discussion in tenure review cases, we recommend that such departments acknowledge this culture and work to develop a more open, deliberative ethos.

B22. We recommend clearly stating in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* and elsewhere who reads the internal letters, as this is not widely understood.

B23. Whereas internal letters are currently read by the FAS Dean, CAP, and members of the ad hoc committee, we recommend including internal letters in the dossier only up through the CAP stage and, at the ad hoc stage, ceasing to make the letters available to <u>external</u> ad hoc members (i.e., members outside Harvard, and Harvard faculty who are outside the candidate's department(s)). At the ad hoc stage, the President and Provost would, as is currently the case, be able to read the letters.

B24. We recommend standardizing internal letters to a greater degree, by providing specific guidance on what these letters should address. We recommend the creation of an online form and increased communication about how to write internal letters, at the departmental, decanal, and Presidential/Provostial levels.

B25. We recommend that internal letters do not become part of the associate review process, but we support other ways for departments to get senior faculty to engage strenuously with the associate review process.

C. Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring (From Section III.D.)

Role in Promotion Reviews

C1. We recommend clear, consistent communication to faculty that teaching, advising, and mentoring are important in the promotion process. This messaging should be in multiple places and aimed at all levels, e.g., tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, and department chairs.

C2. To the extent that this is generalizable, the *relative weights* of teaching/advising/mentoring, research, and service in promotion reviews should be clearly and consistently communicated, so that tenure-track faculty can better prepare for promotion and senior faculty can more effectively mentor (and later evaluate) colleagues. If there are implicit norms for how these elements interact, those norms should be made explicit.

C3. To the extent possible, and in as concrete terms as possible, we recommend that expectations for what tenure-track faculty should aim to achieve in teaching, advising, and mentoring should be articulated at the divisional/SEAS and/or FAS-wide level and adopted by all members of the faculty and administration (from department chairs to [assistant] deans to the Provost and President).

C4. We recommend education on the role of teaching, advising, and mentoring in promotion reviews.

Distinct Categories of Activity and Assessment

C5. We recommend that communications at the departmental, divisional/SEAS, and FAS levels clearly and consistently present teaching, advising, and mentoring as distinct categories of activity and assessment.

Developmental Approach

C6. We recommend promoting a developmental approach to teaching, advising, and mentoring and, as part of this, normalizing the idea of assessment. We recommend consistently, and to all levels of faculty, communicating that these are learned activities that people can get better at, and assessment is a normal and ongoing part of this.

C7. Information useful for assessment should be gathered early in a tenure-track faculty member's career, on a regular (e.g., annual) basis; in all years, not just in tandem with review processes; and with the express purpose of enabling tenure-track faculty to continually improve.

C8. As part of normalizing assessment, we recommend that explicit opportunities be provided for faculty to report on their evolution and improvement in teaching, advising, and mentoring, and to receive feedback on those changes.

<u>Teaching Portfolio</u>

C9. We recommend that departments and divisions/SEAS give tenure-track faculty clear and consistent guidance, from the point of hire onward, about what a strong teaching portfolio would look like.

C10. Case statements in promotion reviews should include (1) an explicit statement of what the department's teaching expectations are/were for the tenure-track faculty member, (2) a discussion of how the faculty member was mentored in developing their teaching portfolio, (3) how the faculty member's offerings contribute to the department's stated goals, and (4) for context, how this teaching portfolio compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.

C11. As a complement to the case statement, in their teaching statement the candidate should discuss their viewpoint on the reasoning and process behind the formation of their teaching portfolio.

<u>Teaching Statement</u>

C12. We recommend that much clearer and more detailed guidance for writing a teaching statement be developed and distributed across departments and divisions/SEAS, and be included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.

<u>Evaluating Classroom Teaching: Multiple Metrics</u>

C13. In lieu of Q scores as the primary metric for evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching, we recommend *both* revising the Q survey and using multiple measures to assess and provide feedback.

- <u>Q survey</u>: We support ongoing efforts by the Office of Undergraduate Education and others at Harvard to revise the Q questions and the Q's overall approach, to better assess effectiveness in classroom teaching.
- <u>Peer Observation</u>: We recommend that peer observation of tenure-track classroom teaching be systematically established as one of the multiple methods for evaluating and providing feedback on teaching.
    - We recommend that clear, consistent criteria be developed and used to structure peer observations, and that a system be developed for providing feedback to the faculty member.
    - We recommend that the evaluative and mentoring functions be kept separate, to the extent possible, so that the same person does not serve both functions.

- Teaching Materials and Pedagogical Approaches: In addition to Q evaluations and peer observation of classroom teaching, we underscore the importance of looking at the course in its totality, including reviewing the faculty member's syllabi, course materials, and pedagogical approaches.
- Other best practices for evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching should be gathered, standardized as appropriate, and circulated across the FAS.

Evaluating Advising and Mentoring: Differentiation, Feedback, and Support

C14. Advising and Mentoring Statements: We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* explicitly state that, for associate reviews and tenure reviews, the candidate should include (in addition to the teaching statement) a statement on mentoring and a separate statement on advising, both of which would include a discussion of their philosophy/approach and their record of achievement. Guidance for writing the advising statement and mentoring statement should be developed and included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*, communicated across departments and divisions/SEAS, and, critically, shared with new tenure-track faculty from the start of their appointment, so that they can start to collect relevant information and have a framework for thinking about their development.

C15. Gathering advisee feedback: We recommend that the methods for gathering feedback about a tenure-track faculty member's effectiveness as an adviser/mentor of undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows be deployed at regular intervals, standardized (to the extent possible), strengthened, and implemented in all departments.

- For promotion reviews (at the very least), to ensure greater consistency across departments in the types of information that are gathered in assessments, we recommend the creation of template emails (that may differ) that can be sent to, respectively, undergraduate, graduate student, and postdoctoral fellow advisees/mentees.
- We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* continue to require that a summary of advisee/mentee feedback be included in the case statement, but that the *Handbook* also now require that the advisee/mentee letters in their entirety (suitably anonymized) be included in the dossier seen by CAP and the ad hoc.
- We also recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask departments to include in the case statement an explanation of what their process was for obtaining advisee/mentee feedback.
- Case statements should also indicate how the candidate's advising load and mentoring load compare to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.

D. Service (From Section III.E)

D1. We recommend that, to the extent possible, and in as concrete terms as possible, expectations for what tenure-track faculty should aim to achieve in the realm of service should be articulated at the divisional/SEAS and/or FAS-wide level and adopted by all members of the faculty and administration (from department chairs to [assistant] deans to the Provost and President).

D2. We recommend that tenure-track faculty submit a "service statement" as part of their promotion materials (for associate reviews and tenure reviews), and that clear and detailed guidance for writing such a statement be developed and distributed across divisions/SEAS and/or the FAS, and be included in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.

D3. We recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask departments to include in the case statement (for associate reviews and tenure reviews): a) a discussion of the guidance they gave the candidate in developing as a citizen, and b) an indication of how the candidate's service load compares to others in the department or field, to help calibrate the candidate's contributions.

E. Covid-19 (From Section III.F)

E1. We recommend that the FAS continue to remain alert to ways that tenure track policies and processes can thoroughly take into account, and reflect, the impact of COVID-19 on colleagues' ability to conduct their research, teach, advise, and mentor, perform service, and otherwise develop as members of the Harvard community.

E2. To further contextualize faculty members' record, we recommend that the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* ask faculty undergoing associate reviews and tenure reviews to submit with their dossier materials a short statement describing how, if at all, Covid has affected them professionally (and/or personally). We recommend that the FAS require such statements for all candidates for the next seven years.

F. Ad Hoc Process (From Section III.G)

F1. We recommend that the University consider examining the ad hoc process, with an eye towards assessing whether any productive changes can be made to increase (within reason and with due concern for confidentiality) transparency about its processes and the feedback that is provided to departments after tenure cases.

F2. We recommend a careful, confidential examination of CAP's and the ad hoc's reasoning in an appropriate sample of past tenure cases denied at the ad hoc stage, to gain a better sense of any patterns in these two bodies' aligned or else discrepant reasoning. As appropriate, we recommend sharing general findings with the FAS faculty as a way to further educate faculty and restore confidence in their ability to mentor tenure-track colleagues.

F3. We recommend that CAP consider sharing, to the extent possible, its general recommendation on each tenure case – that is, the strengths and weaknesses of the case – with the department chair and the tenure review committee chair. This will help to increase transparency in the process and, in some cases, help prepare departments for a possible negative outcome.

F4. We recommend that CAP continue its efforts to educate faculty about what happens at the CAP stage of the review process.

F5. We recommend continued education for tenure-track and tenured faculty about how the tenure-track process works and best practices (as mentioned throughout this report) in preparing candidates for promotion and effectively presenting promotion cases.

V. Appendices

1. TTRC Charge

2. TTRC Member List

Appendix 1: TTRC Charge

Charge for the FAS Tenure Track Review Committee

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) adopted a tenure-track system in 2005. In so doing, the FAS moved away from a system in which assistant professors and associate professors were guaranteed neither the right to be reviewed for promotion nor the availability of funding for a tenured position. In the tenure-track system since then, all tenure-track faculty are guaranteed a review according to specific time tables, and if the review is successful and they are promoted, funding is assured for their position.

In the past fifteen years, the FAS has made enormous progress in developing and implementing policies and procedures that increase rigor and consistency in the tenure-track system. Even so, the tenure track continues to reveal areas for possible change. With a decade and a half of data and experience behind us, it is time to comprehensively review our policies and procedures for associate and tenure reviews.

The primary goal of the tenure-track system is to build an outstanding faculty. The purpose of the current review is to assess whether changes to FAS policies and procedures would make the tenure-track system more effective in achieving that goal.

In particular, the Tenure Track Review Committee (TTRC) is charged with examining the following aspects of reviews for promotion to associate professor and to tenured professor. The committee will consult with members of the FAS community, as appropriate, and will make recommendations by February 2021 for Dean Claudine Gay's consideration.

(1) Associate Reviews

"An associate professorship is a tenure-track appointment held by individuals who have demonstrated sufficient promise and achievement to qualify for tenure at a major research institution within three to five years." [*FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*]

The dual goals of the associate review are (1) to assess the candidate's standing against the associate professor criteria and (2) to provide the candidate with mentoring and constructive feedback. How can we strengthen associate review policies and procedures to help us achieve these goals?

The TTRC is charged with considering the questions below:

a) How can we make more effective the way we assess teaching and advising? Do we need to collect additional information?
b) In what ways, if at all, can the external-letter process be improved? Are we bringing the appropriate range of external expertise to bear in assessing the candidate's impact and trajectory?
c) How can the review process encourage committees and departments to engage with the strengths and weaknesses of cases in a full and balanced way?
d) To ensure that the candidate receives helpful feedback from the review, are we communicating the right information to them, and in the most appropriate way?

In addition, I ask the committee to consider whether the associate professor term is the appropriate length. Should the associate professor term be extended from four years to five years? Currently, associate professors come up for their tenure review at the beginning of their third year. This gives them two years as an associate professor to respond to feedback from their associate review. Is this enough time for them to make substantial progress?

(2) Tenure reviews

"Tenured professorial appointments are reserved for scholars of the first order of eminence who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and research and who have the capacity to make significant and lasting contributions to the department(s) proposing the appointment. The foremost criteria for appointment are: scholarly achievement and impact on the field, evidence of intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, potential for future accomplishments, teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students, and the individual's potential contributions to the University and broader scholarly communities. Past accomplishments or a general standard of merit are not sufficient for appointment." [*FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*]

The goal of the tenure review is to (1) assess the candidate's standing against the tenure criteria and (2) by identifying faculty who merit tenure, build the long-term strength of the FAS faculty. How can we strengthen tenure review policies and procedures to help us achieve these goals? In addition, I ask the committee to consider how we can instill greater trust in the tenure review process.

The TTRC is charged with considering the questions below:

a) What guidance can be given to departments to help them effectively define a candidate's field? In particular, we need to be able to gauge how a candidate's achievements and impact scale within their subfield, their field broadly defined, and their discipline or area of scholarship.
b) How can we make more effective the way we assess teaching and advising?
c) How can we make more effective the way we assess service, formal and informal?
d) External letters:
    - How can we ensure that comparison lists and lists of external letter writers are sufficiently broad and deep that we can effectively assess the impact of the candidate's work?
    - How can we make the purpose of the comparand exercise, which is to gauge the candidate's standing and trajectory, clearer to departments and more uniformly implemented?
    - How can we make the letter-writing process less burdensome for letter writers, while still obtaining the information that we need? In particular, some letter writers dislike Harvard's system of suggesting comparands and asking for rankings. Should the FAS experiment with letting letter writers define comparison groups for the candidate's subfield, field, and discipline? What alternatives to ranking, if any, would the committee suggest?
e) How can the review process encourage faculty to engage with the strengths and weaknesses of cases in a full and balanced way?

f) How do we ensure a full and fair review in cases in which a department does not have in-house expertise in the candidate's field(s)?

g) When candidates serve on a standing curricular committee such as History and Literature or Social Studies, what should be the process for getting input from curricular committee members in the tenure review?

h) What, if any, additional guidance should be provided about the confidential letters that individual faculty send to the Edgerley Family Dean of the FAS? Experience has shown that these letters are useful, as not all departments have cultures in which faculty feel comfortable openly sharing their views. However, these letters can create stress for both the candidate and faculty members. Would different guidance help to allay these concerns?

i) The *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook* defines CAP's role as follows: "The Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP) reviews the dossier and advises the Edgerley Family Dean of the FAS on the next step for the dossier, which can include the following: (1) The case is sufficiently strong to forward to the President (2) CAP needs further information or the department needs to modify the case statement before the Dean decides whether to forward the case to the President, or (3) The case is not strong enough, and CAP advises the Dean to turn down the tenure case. In the latter instance, the Dean notifies the department in writing within a reasonable timeframe."
   - How can CAP better communicate its role?
   - What information regarding CAP's deliberations should be shared with departments or candidates?

j) In general, should more detailed feedback be given to candidates, chairs, and review committees, especially when cases are unsuccessful, to help departments and others to learn for future cases? How, if at all, can or should the tenure review process be made more transparent?

No list of questions can capture every aspect of the FAS's tenure-track system that might merit our attention. But the issues noted above are of high priority. If, in its work, the committee identifies other aspects of FAS policy and procedure in pressing need of review, it has latitude to explore those issues. However, this should not be at the expense of fully addressing the matters listed above.

Appendix 2: TTRC Member List

FAS Tenure Track Review Committee
AY 2020-2021

NAME	TITLE
Hopi Hoekstra, chair	Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology and Curator of Mammals in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and of Molecular and Cellular Biology
Joanna Aizenberg	Amy Smith Berylson Professor of Materials Science, Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology
Mahzarin Banaji	Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics
David Charbonneau	Professor of Astronomy, Harvard College Professor
David Cutler	Otto Eckstein Professor of Applied Economics
Maya Jasanoff	Coolidge Professor of History, X.D. and Nancy Yang Professor of Arts and Sciences
Melissa McCormick	Professor of Japanese Art and Culture
Ann Pearson	Murray and Martha Ross Professor of Environmental Sciences, Harvard College Professor
Jennifer Roberts	Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Professor of the Humanities
Tommie Shelby	Caldwell Titcomb Professor of African and African American Studies and of Philosophy
Gu-Yeon Wei	Robert and Suzanne Case Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
Nina Zipser, *ex officio*	Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning
Lisa Mincieli, staff support	Director of Special Projects, FAS Office for Faculty Affairs
Andrea Shen, staff support	Associate Director, FAS Office for Faculty Affairs