

Sample Letters to Referees for Tenure and Promotion Applications

T&P – SAMPLE LETTER 6

To Students re: Teaching

Dear Student:

We are writing you to see if you would help us by providing your views about the teaching of Professor XX, in the Department of _____ (*or Faculty, as appropriate*).

As you may be aware, professors at York University who are in the “tenure stream” apply for tenure (and promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor) within the first few years of their appointment. “Tenure” means permanent, continuing employment (following an initial probationary period of employment). To prepare for this review, a committee in the candidate’s department assembles a file that includes confidential letters of assessment of the candidate’s work.

In order to gather a complete picture of a candidate’s teaching, we do several things: we ask colleagues to sit in on classes and write evaluations of the candidate’s teaching; we review students’ quantitative course evaluations; we ask teaching assistants to write assessments; and we invite students (randomly selected) to write letters evaluating the candidate’s teaching. That is how we came to write to you. All of the letters are written in confidence, as explained below. These assessments, taken together, enable the “adjudicating committee” in the department to evaluate the candidate’s teaching.

We hope that you will take the time to write a letter assessing Professor X’s teaching from your own point of view. In your letter, please indicate the course or courses you took with him (*or her*). Your letter should comment specifically on such issues as Professor X’s teaching strategies, the organization of the course, effectiveness in communicating, availability and responsiveness to the needs of students. Please feel free to add or comment on any other teaching-related issues which you consider pertinent.

All the letters we gather for Professor X’s tenure and promotion file must be signed, but they will be treated as confidential. Since candidates are entitled to read copies of the letters with names and addresses and any other identifying information removed, we ask that your name, address and any contextual information be conveyed in a header section or in a brief cover letter separate from your assessment. Candidates will be provided with a list of names of referees.

Please send us your letter by no later than _____ to allow us to meet our deadlines.

On behalf of the file preparation committee, I would like to thank you for taking the time to write to us. Your comments, along with those of other students, will form an important element of our assessment of Professor X’s teaching.

Yours sincerely,

Chair

File Preparation Committee