

In the official tenure documentation, there really isn't much said about the outside review letters. Our documentation states: **Each reviewer should be asked to state, at the very least, the nature of his or her acquaintance with the candidate, and to evaluate the candidate's published work and/or creative endeavors, and recognition and standing among his or her peers.**

Here is my opinion.

1. The credentials of the reviewer are important. The person must be an expert in the field. We seek letters from recognized national authorities in the candidate's special field. We prefer references who have achieved senior status and national recognition. They are asked to evaluate your

- Reputation in the area of expertise.
- Leadership in professional activities and how demonstrated.

Thus, a reasonable match between the research expertise of candidate and evaluator is required. Otherwise, they are not able to comment on your reputation or professional activities.

2. It is important that they be familiar with your research. Otherwise, they may not agree to serve as a reviewer. Half of the letters of reference must come from your list, so you should be reasonably confident they will accept. I would definitely pick people you have met - conference organizers, someone who you talked to at a conference, someone who you have corresponded with about research, someone you have referenced.

3. They should be from an institution which is **equal or better** than USU. Because the quality of the candidate's scholarly contribution is evaluated, most of the external referees should have university affiliations. I realize we often state that reviewers will come from "peer institutions" - but as long as the institution reputation is equal or better than USU, a peer university isn't critical. Reviewers are told a bit about USU. We generally felt that someone from a good university who had been out for a while would understand how USU differed from their institution, and would be supportive. I would MUCH rather have an expert, familiar with your work, from a high powered university, than someone who was not an expert and not familiar with the area from a peer university. The letter from the expert, familiar with your work, from a high powered university will be held in much higher regard than one from someone not familiar with your work or not highly esteemed. If someone says, "Well, this isn't my area but the research seems okay" it isn't nearly as influential as someone who says, "S/He publishes in all the important conferences. Her/His work is novel. S/He solves important problems."

4. They must be senior personnel. It is typically deemed inappropriate to solicit letters of recommendation from assistant professors. New associate professors are less desirable than full professors or established associate professors.

5. They must not be close associates (or perceived to be such). Major Professors and coauthors should not be used as references.