

CAP Guidelines for Selecting External Referees

UCSD Academic Personnel Policy (PPM 230 – 20 V.A.6 and PPM 230 – 28 IV.B) requires a certain number of independent external referee letters for appointment and for career reviews (except for advancement to Step VI). External referees should be individuals who are independent of the candidate, who are expert in the candidate's field, and who are able to provide an objective appraisal of the candidate's work. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to departments regarding who CAP would not consider an “independent referee.”

An external referee has a conflict if he or she:

- is the candidate’s family member;
- has been the candidate’s collaborator¹ within the past five (5) years;
- has a current grant or a pending grant application with the candidate;
- has a current or past mentoring relationship with the candidate;
- is from the same institution as the candidate;
- could have his or her impartiality questioned due to the circumstances surrounding the case. In these cases, the department should determine whether a reasonable person with the relevant facts of the case would question the referee’s impartiality.

If there is a compelling reason for selecting an external referee that falls into one of the above categories, the justification for selecting the individual should be clearly stated in the file. *This information should only appear on the Referee I.D. form.*

The solicitation letter to the external referees should include language asking the external referee to comment on his or her relationship with the candidate under the signature block. CAP considers this information on the referee-candidate relationship to be very important to the evaluation of the case, and may return any file that does not include this information. All review-relevant interactions with external referees during the review process should be documented in the file.

CAP welcomes letters from non-independent referees when they shed light on certain aspects of the file, such as a candidate’s teaching ability, clinical skills, or their contributions to collaborative research and creative activity. However, non-independent letters are intended to supplement, not substitute for independent external referee letters. Consequently, the department will still need to ensure that the correct number of independent external referee letters is submitted in the file.

¹ A collaborator is someone whose engagement in the candidate’s research or other scholarly and creative activity is sufficient to warrant co-authorship on publications.