

Academic Promotion and Tenure External Reviewer Instructions Wording

Thank you, {reviewer's salutation and name}, for agreeing to serve as an external reviewer for {candidate name}, {candidate current role} in the {candidate dept} at the Georgia Institute of Technology. As you may recall, {candidate name} is a candidate for promotion to {candidate recommended role} during the {current cycle} academic year. This process requires comments on the quality, creativity, and impact of the candidate's contributions from disciplinary experts outside of Georgia Tech.

You will be asked to review a collection of materials, including three to five intellectual products, the candidate's vitae, and a statement of accomplishments, which our [Faculty Handbook](#) limits to five pages.

Please provide a candid assessment of the candidate's accomplishments across their portfolio of creative scholarship, education, and service, drawing from materials presented in the package as well as your own knowledge of their achievements. Most critically, your assessment of the candidate's impact is deeply valued. We define impact as transformative contributions to their scholarly discipline; educational pedagogy; community-building activities that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion; and/or public engagement, among other contributions.

Georgia Tech recognizes that Covid-19 circumstances affected productivity and achievement of many faculty members, as described in the Covid-19 Impact section below. The candidate may have noted in the CV or narrative that extraordinary pandemic circumstances in 2020 and 2021 affected their research, teaching, and/or service. We ask that your assessment of the candidate's accomplishments take these special circumstances into account.

It is the policy of the Georgia Institute of Technology to maintain the confidentiality of your evaluation to the greatest possible extent permitted by law. While the Georgia Open Records Act does apply, {candidate name} has signed a statement that {candidate name} will not request to see letters from outside referees or seek their identity. However, we ask that you indicate in your letter that you desire that it be treated as a confidential personnel document by including the following wording: "By signing and submitting this reference letter, I expect that my identity will be kept confidential and that my letter will be treated as a confidential personnel document."

Your letter should be directed to {chair name} and it will become part of the dossier prepared for {candidate name}. Please, explicitly state your past/current relationship to the candidate in your letter.

You will also be asked to enter a brief (maximum 100 words) biosketch. Since your letter will be reviewed by others in the Institute who will not necessarily be familiar with you or your field, this information will provide perspective on your review.

I thank you for your assistance and look forward to receiving your review at your earliest convenience, but not later than {MM/DD/YYYY}. If you do not feel comfortable uploading your letter into our electronic system, you may email a PDF version of your letter on letterhead to {chair email} and follow up with a signed copy in the mail. Thank you for your cooperation.

Georgia Tech values your insight and appreciates your time and effort in participating in this important process.

Covid-10 Impact

Due to Covid-19, Georgia Tech closed its Atlanta campus, including research facilities, on March 12, 2020, and moved to online instruction on March 23. Research facilities resumed limited operations on June 18. Despite increasing campus activity in the fall 2020 semester, there were lingering effects of the pandemic on university work. As a result of this disruption, all untenured faculty members were allowed a one-year extension of their probationary period. We do not expect productivity during the period disrupted by the pandemic to match that of other academic years; we also expect that for some researchers the impact may extend beyond the period of campus closure. Please also note that teaching evaluations were not collected for individual faculty in Spring 2020 because of the sudden move to remote learning in the second half of the academic term. Teaching in Fall 2020 was conducted over a compressed semester schedule in a variety of formats (e.g., in-person, remote, and a hybrid of in-person and remote sessions); an unexpected, different mode of instruction may influence student evaluations. Spring 2021 continued to have campus restrictions on the physical buildings and activities within, including those in research labs, in order to abide by CDC recommendations and University System of Georgia guidance. The teaching modes continued to be a mixture of remote, hybrid, and in-person throughout Spring 2021.

We ask that evaluators consider the candidate's overall record in light of the many dimensions by which the candidate's progress, particularly related to research, may have been affected by Covid-19, including but not limited to:

- Changing household circumstances due to lockdown, including school and childcare closures, spread of illness, and unemployment of family members.
- Loss of access to labs, both Georgia Tech facilities and national labs, a circumstance likely to have impacts beyond the next year, due to cascading scheduling.
- Loss of access to archives, library materials, and fieldwork sites.
- Long-term disruption of research involving human subjects or fieldwork due to Institute-required stoppages and also the difficulty of recruiting participants during the pandemic.
- Shift in intellectual focus of scholarship from experiments to modeling, which may be less effective or publishable in some research areas.
- Loss of previous funding and lack of new funding, particular concerns for those relying on industry relationships.
- Impacts of changes to less familiar instructional modes (i.e., online and hybrid) influencing student evaluations of teaching, perhaps based on individual student preference for in-person or online mode of delivery.
- Being enlisted to teach less familiar or new courses due to program needs.
- Fewer opportunities to teach specialized, smaller-enrollment courses because of fewer on-campus students.
- Fewer opportunities to teach since some faculty were encouraged to reduce program budgets by buying out courses, resulting in fewer teaching evaluations.
- Slowed student progress toward a degree. For example, expectations that assistant professors will have graduated doctoral students in some degree programs prior to tenure should be moderated.
- Fewer new international graduate students and postdocs being able to enter the United States, impacting advising of students and research productivity of faculty.

- Students and visiting scholars interrupting or discontinuing their studies and work to return to their home countries.
- Cancelled opportunities to present at conferences, which diminishes opportunities for networking, visibility, and professional service.
- Lost opportunities for seminar visits.
- Diminished research outcomes due to lockdown and budgetary problems affecting publication venues (e.g., journals and presses).
- Greater difficulty in obtaining external references, due to increased faculty workload around the world.
- Taking on different roles to help with budgets, teaching, and student expectations/needs during this changing time.

Some of these effects can be quantified, and faculty have been allowed to footnote events and opportunities that would have occurred (e.g., seminar visits and conference talks) or which were impacted (e.g., grant budget reductions or stoppages) by the pandemic with a footnote such as “Cancelled due to Covid-19.” Other effects cannot be captured in a cv or a narrative statement, and reviewers are encouraged to reflect on the well-documented effects of Covid-19, especially on women, black, LatinX, AAPI, and Middle Eastern faculty, see for example the references below.

References

[“On the Verge of Burnout” Covid-19’s impact on faculty well-being and career plans.](#) Chronicles of Higher Education. January 2021.

[Impact of COVID-19 on the Careers of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.](#) National Academies Press. 2021.

Don Bambino Geno Tai, et al., [The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the United States.](#) Clinical Infectious Diseases, vol. 72, Issue 4, 2020.

Colleen Flaherty, [Something’s Got to Give.](#) Inside Higher Ed. August 2020.

Jessica L. Malisch, et al., [In the wake of COVID-19, academia needs new solutions to ensure gender equity.](#) PNAS. 2020.