

10 Things to Consider While Writing a Tenure Review Letter

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While graduating, I have often seen a few faculty members striving to put together their tenure file. The academic tenure file is similar to that of a promotion file; however, a tenure protects the faculty member's academic freedom. Furthermore, it protects the quality of teaching and research and thus the integrity of institutions of higher education. In simpler terms, it means lifetime employment!

A tenure review process is conducted between 5 and 7 years after the professor commences with his/her [recruited position](#). In this process, the departmental committee not only evaluates a professor's contributions in research, teaching, and service to the university, but also solicit tenure review letters from prominent senior scholars and some of the students of the candidate.

What is a Tenure Review Letter?

An academic tenure review letter is a document solicited from five to ten prominent senior scholars in the field and also from some of the students of the candidate, whose tenure track is being reviewed. Despite their ubiquity, the format and important elements of the academic tenure review letters are not discussed usually. These letters are confidential within and outside the academic communities, especially to tenure

candidates.

Academic tenure review letter is written by external reviewers who could be colleagues, supervisors, faculty members, students, and other individuals who are closely related to the tenure track professor's field. They evaluate the candidate's work and impact on the field to make a [recommendation](#) about whether they should be awarded tenure or not.

Important Elements of a Tenure Review Letter

While review letters are not the only deciding factors to grant tenure, they are however the significant ones. Therefore, it is imperative to write the review letter in a standard format inclusive of the elements mentioned below:

1. Brief statement of your qualifications in the field that explains how you are a suitable person to write a tenure review letter.
2. One or two statements on your working relationship with the tenure candidate, and a clear statement that there is no identifiable conflict of interest. Furthermore, you must explain in a sentence or two, what you reviewed before writing the letter.
3. A detailed and longer section of the tenure letter must be devoted to analyzing the candidate's contributions to the field. This paragraph should summarize what you think the contributions of the candidate are to the field. It must include— both the quality of and the extent of those contributions. Adding to this paragraph, describe the common trajectory of competent scholars at comparable points in their career (compared with the tenure candidate).
4. If possible, mention what you have learned from the scholar's work, and what the [candidate's writing](#) samples tell you about the body of work.
5. Talk about prior [collaborative research work](#) in the context of the candidate's scholarly trajectory.
6. Furthermore, discuss the scholarly publication outlets as an indication of focus and readership.
7. Be vigilant while mentioning any serious flaws in the candidate's record. Ensure that this section is explained clearly and with a neutral tone. Furthermore, remember that there must be reasons behind your judgment.
8. Following that section, depending on the field of study, write a short paragraph on other dimensions of scholarship that are relevant to the candidate's position.
9. In addition, explain how the candidate mentored new scholars in the field; and how is he/she most suitable for the tenure.
10. Lastly, the closing statement must include an explicit recommendation.

How to Write a Tenure Review Letter?

As academics, we are trained to collate and evaluate information from authentic resources by following ethical practice. While norms and practices across academic disciplines vary as to how to write a useful and academically rigorous tenure-review letter, there are certain things that need to be followed.

10 things to consider while writing an [academic tenure](#) review letter are as follows:

1. As a tenure review letter writer, your job is not to [critique the individual](#) but to provide a broader context of the scholar's academic career and potential future work.
2. Do not confuse emotions with facts. Be pragmatic and do not let your emotions influence your letter.
3. Do not overwhelm the tenure department with irrelevant information. Typically, the institution asks a set of questions about the candidate. Answer all the questions asked by the institution explicitly.
4. Importantly, remember to evaluate the candidate based on the [university's tenure standards](#).
5. Avoid writing multipage letters. Contextualization about the candidate's academic growth helps the department in making the decision; however, some major points in the letter can be missed by the readers due to its length. Therefore, be succinct as the readers are more likely to read shorter yet informative letters entirely.
6. Provide an overall assessment of the candidate's work along with critiques of each work individually. This offers competitive differentiation of the candidate from their peers.
7. Do not view the candidate's publication placement as a correlation with the work's merit. If not all, read some of the works with no bias or presumption attributable to its publication.
8. Remember that no tenure candidate is perfect. There's a scope of improvement for all. You can note areas of potential improvements in the tenure review letter. This makes the tenure department believe that you have been an honest critique, which further results in enhancing the credibility of the compliments mentioned throughout the letter. Furthermore, on successful completion of the tenure review process, the tenure committee will aggregate and share the constructive feedback with the candidate. This helps candidates in receiving candid and valuable insights into how their peers view their work. However, be fair with your feedbacks as the tenure committee will focus on any negative remarks to determine its significance.
9. Don't write anything in the letter that you wouldn't say to the candidate's face. It isn't a place to air dirty laundry or unsubstantiated rumors.
10. The tenure committee puts in a lot of effort and energy to assemble a fair and complete tenure file for the candidate, as do you. Hence, you must deliver your review letter on time to avoid holding up of the review process or create a void in the candidate's tenure file.

Tenure review letter sample: [Click here to download.](#)

Have you ever been approached to write a tenure review letter? Didn't know how to write one? Let us know how this article helped you in writing the letter. You can also visit our [Q&A forum](#) for frequently asked questions related to different aspects of research writing and publishing answered by our team that comprises subject-matter experts, eminent researchers, and publication experts.

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