

Pay careful attention to the letters you receive from the dean each year renewing your contract. They should include clear recommendations for what you need to do to meet requirements for tenure. They may include specific information about what the chair or dean is expecting you to complete or areas in which they wish you to improve. If you do not agree with the evaluation, it is also important to commit your response to writing.

Evaluations, peer

You will sometimes be in the position of having to review your colleagues—for example, when they come up for promotion or tenure (see **Evaluations, annual, pretenure**)—and to be reviewed by them as well. You may also be asked by publishers and journals to do peer reviews of manuscripts. While reviews are meant to be confidential, reviewing the work of your colleagues can be a source of tension, especially in small departments. It is helpful if you remember that the critiques of and by your peers (whether of teaching or scholarship) can be a valuable source of learning and growth. While we may not enjoy being judged or judging, it is part of the learning experience throughout an academic career, and something we need to get used to.

That said, it is important to remember when doing these reviews that even the harshest criticism can be given gently and with a generous spirit. It is often the tone of reviews, rather than their content, that inflicts unnecessary pain and breeds an atmosphere of ill will. You may find yourself in a situation where your best judgment tells you that a colleague's work does not merit tenure or promotion by the standards your university has set. You need to be sure that you have really thought through the situation, have not been unduly swayed by political pressure, and have come to an honest and ethical conclusion. That is all you can ask of yourself. If you do make such a judgment, do your best to treat the person in a supportive and friendly manner, as you will have to live with her or him for at least a year if tenure is not granted.