**Penn State Altoona**

**Division of Education, Human Development, and Social Sciences**

**Division Statement on the Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments**

Concrete evidence of an active record of research and creative accomplishments is required for tenure and promotion at Penn State Altoona. Research is broadly defined as the examination or reexamination of a topic, key concept, or theoretical approach in one’s discipline.[[1]](#footnote-2) Faculty are encouraged to focus on 1) articles published in refereed journals, 2) books or parts of books, and 3) papers presented at technical or professional meetings (in that order). Sole authorship of research plainly implicates the author’s contribution to the research output. Increasingly, research in the social and behavioral sciences is produced collaboratively. In collaborative work, faculty are encouraged to be cognizant of their percentage contribution and, when feasible and appropriate, aim to be lead author on collaborative research outputs. Receipt of a substantial, peer reviewed, external grant, though not required, may be weighed similar to a peer-reviewed publication, because of their highly competitive, refereed nature, and value to the university. Evidence of the quality of a candidate’s research and creative accomplishments will be provided by the candidate in the narrative statement and through external letters of assessment.

The following criteria may also serve as guidelines to estimate the quality of the candidate’s research:

**Articles published in refereed journals:**

Requirement: The journal article is published, or documentation can be provided that it has been accepted for publication.

Indicators of greater quality:

* The publishing journal utilizes a peer-reviewed process.
* The journal article represents original research conducted by the candidate.
* The publishing journal is of high quality as indicated by the external reviews or as indicated by rejection rates, journal impact factors, and affiliations with organizations of international or national prestige.
* The journal article can be identified as consistent with the candidate’s focused line(s) of inquiry.

**Books and/or parts of books:**

Requirement: The book or part of a book is published, or documentation can be provided that it has been accepted for publication.

Indicators of greater quality:

* The book or part of a book has received favorable reviews in recognized academic journals.
* The book or part of a book is based on original research conducted by the candidate and makes a scholarly contribution to the candidate’s discipline.
* The book or part of a book is published by a recognized academic or commercial press that publishes work in the candidate’s discipline.
* The book or part of a book can be identified as consistent with the candidate’s focused line(s) of inquiry.

**Papers presented at technical or professional meetings:**

Requirement: The paper is accepted through a competitive or refereed process, or the candidate was invited to make the presentation.

Indicators of greater quality:

* The meeting is held by an internationally or nationally recognized scholarly organization or an internationally or nationally recognized organization that produces a refereed journal.
* The presentation can be identified as consistent with the candidate’s focused line(s) of inquiry.

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**The Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments**

**Additional Considerations**

The following comments are not considered part of the Division’s official statement on the Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments but are presented to help faculty navigate the tenure and promotion process. The order of these considerations is, by no means, an indication of their significance or importance in the promotion process. Consider each item individually and based upon its own merit or utility.

**Non-refereed Publications**

Non-refereed publications are considered part of a faculty member’s total body of work and indicate creative accomplishment and engagement with one’s discipline. However, it is important to be aware that such publications will, generally, be given lesser weight by faculty review committees and external reviewers. It is the responsibility of candidates seeking promotion and tenure to explain the relative importance of such work in their narrative statements to assist review committees and external reviewers with their assessments. Faculty members should also consult with the Division Head and other college mentors on how specific projects are likely to be evaluated and the extent to which such work should be pursued. Though the following list does not include all such publications, it is instructive on how candidates should expect non-refereed publications to be evaluated.

Book reviews. Academic reviews of scholarly monographs are an important service to one’s discipline and are certainly of crucial importance to the authors of those monographs. In most cases, however, they carry little weight as research publications. Certain reviews may be evaluated differently. For example, review essays which, beyond evaluating the worth of the monographs under consideration, also advance knowledge by integrating ideas across monographs, assess the standing of a discipline, or suggest novel directions for future research, may be viewed as higher quality contributions. The value of such contributions must be made clear in the narrative statement.

Textbooks. Textbooks or parts of textbooks that are intended primarily for classroom instruction are generally viewed as summaries of knowledge rather than original contributions to one’s discipline and, therefore, tend to be given lesser weight in reviews. The assessment of the quality of the text may vary with the intended audience. Texts and handbooks which present cutting edge ideas and techniques to professional researchers tend to be evaluated more favorably than textbooks oriented towards graduate students. Graduate texts, in turn, tend to be evaluated more favorably than undergraduate texts. Though faculty should not be discouraged from pursuing such work, it is important that the overall dossier be balanced with original contributions as well as projects such as these.

Encyclopedia entries. Encyclopedia entries may be indicators of a faculty member’s general reputation as an expert in their field of research, but they tend to be evaluated in much the same way as parts of textbooks. The work generally involves summations of research rather than original contributions, though the intended audience for the specific project may add greater or lesser weight to the evaluation of the encyclopedia entry. The value of such contributions must be made clear in the narrative statement.

Pedagogical articles. The content of pedagogical writings has a significant impact on their evaluation. Pedagogical articles that are published in peer reviewed journals, based on original research, and/or which make important contributions to the advancement of pedagogy will be given greater weight. Brief articles on teaching tips, though important to one’s discipline, are unlikely to be given the same weight as other creative accomplishments. Because Penn State Altoona and our Division place great value on quality teaching in tenure and promotion decisions, faculty may be better served by placing such shorter pieces within the dossier section on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as indicators of a commitment to excellence in that area. Such decisions should be discussed with the Division Head or other college mentors.

Agency reports. The contribution of one’s research expertise to outside agencies and organizations is evidence of both research activity and service to the community. Faculty review committees and external reviewers are likely to expect significant research on behalf of agencies to also lead to peer reviewed publications. However, there may be several reasons why such reports do not generate published articles. In these instances, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to explain the significance of the research in the narrative statement.

**External and Internal Grants and Research Funding**.

The pursuit of external grants, though not required, is encouraged because of their highly competitive, refereed nature, and the value successful external grants bring to the university. Externally funded research is often viewed as an indicator of engagement in significant research and recognition of research abilities by agencies and organizations outside of the college and university. The pursuit of internal grants at Penn State Altoona and Penn State more broadly, though not required, is also encouraged. Internally funded research is often viewed as an indicator of local support for research to meet major mission priorities for the institution, for example, funded projects that encourage cross-campus collaboration or that engage undergraduates in the research mission of the institution. Internally funded research is thought to be especially valuable if that research leads to the pursuit of external grants. While external research support, in general, weighs more positively in a dossier than internal research support, it is the faculty member’s responsibility, in consultation with the Division Head and other mentors, to communicate the relative importance of such research and its products in the narrative statement.

**Undergraduate Research**

Undergraduate research is valued at Penn State Altoona. Therefore, mentoring undergraduate students through the research process, in part or in whole, is often viewed as an indicator of the faculty member’s commitment to this mission priority. It is worth noting that the contribution of such work to the Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments does not differ from other research projects. If the work significantly advances knowledge and contributes to one’s discipline, especially if it results in refereed publications or presentations, then it will carry the same weight as other research. The value of such contributions must be made clear in the narrative statement. If the research undertaken does not result in truly new knowledge, however fresh it might be for the students, then it may be better used to demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching in the dossier under the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. When faculty consider mentoring undergraduate researchers, additional factors should also be considered, including whether the undergraduate research falls outside of the faculty member’s focused line(s) of inquiry, the faculty member’s anticipated or eventual contribution to the paper (e.g., principal author, supervised person who authored the work, etc.), and the quality and robustness of the faculty member’s existing body of research.

**Focused Line of Inquiry**

Practically speaking, having a focused line of inquiry in research activities is beneficial to the faculty member for two reasons: 1) it assists in the identification of qualified external reviewers and 2) it can help establish a national and international reputation. While a focused line of inquiry remains an effective method of securing promotion and tenure, it is not an absolute requirement. Faculty members who have already established a focused line of inquiry may have the ability to take on projects that stray from that focus with little detriment to their dossiers. However, faculty members who have not established themselves in such a manner, and instead remain unfocused in their research efforts, may find greater difficulty in achieving favorable external reviews. Faculty members should reflect upon their current body of work and the potential quality of the final product before pursuing a divergent research project. It is highly recommended that the faculty member seeks mentoring in such a situation.

The identification of a faculty member’s focused line of inquiry should be a key feature of the narrative statement. Remember that the dossier will pass through review committees at the Division, College, and University levels and that the members of these review committees will represent a variety of disciplines. Identify your line of inquiry as though you were presenting it to the entire university because, in essence, you are.

*Approved by Division April 26th, 2011.*

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1. For further reference, see AC23: <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ac23> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)