

Scholarship Guidelines
Department of Psychology
Whitman College

The tenure-track faculty in psychology developed these guidelines in October-November 2010. In creating these guidelines, we borrowed heavily from the existing guidelines for psychology at Kenyon College.

Components of Professional Activity

We expect our tenure-track faculty to engage in an ongoing program of scholarship for tenure and/or promotion. Those faculty must demonstrate their scholarship through publication, and may additionally demonstrate scholarship through other means described below. Applied faculty must additionally demonstrate their scholarship through obtaining and maintaining licensure.

Publication

Publications of original scholarly work in peer-reviewed outlets are the *sine qua non* of professional activity in psychology at most academic institutions. Although the rate of publication will be more modest for psychologists at liberal arts colleges than it is for university researchers, the psychology department at Whitman values these contributions to the discipline and regards them as necessary for tenure and/or promotion (in keeping with the Faculty Handbook), as they reflect the product of independent scholarship and engagement in the science and practice of psychology beyond Whitman.

Common publication formats include research articles (empirical, qualitative, or theoretical) in scientific journals (print or online), book chapters, books (edited or authored), monographs, professional instruments, and the like. All these forms of publication are subject to peer review, with journal articles typically receiving the most rigorous level of peer review. In addition, the department values publications in psychology that serve a pedagogical purpose and/or are written for a wider audience; such publications include textbooks, popular books, articles in journals whose focus is on the teaching of psychology, encyclopedia entries, professional manuals, and the like. We value these forms of scholarship because they also represent independent scholarship and engagement in the discipline, and are subject to editorial or peer review.

The time and resource requirements for these different types of publication vary widely (e.g., recruitment of traditionally underrepresented participant samples who vary in age, geography, and/or culture; comparisons of behavior across different sample groups or species; longitudinal studies that can take years to complete). Given these widely varying time and resource requirements, the department does not recommend a minimum requirement for the number and type of publications necessary for tenure and/or promotion at Whitman. However, the psychology department would consider the absence of peer-reviewed publications to be unacceptable, both for tenure and for further promotion.

Importantly, the aforementioned forms of publication that are listed on a candidate's vita as "in press" are those that have been accepted for publication but have not yet appeared in print. The lag between acceptance for publication and actual publication can be several months or even years, and work that is listed as "in press" is not in any way less complete, less reviewed, or of lesser quality than work that has been published. Consequently, we emphasize that work that is listed as "in press" should be counted among those works that have already been published.

Finally, much scholarship in psychology takes place collaboratively with students, faculty, and/or staff at other institutions. The department does not regard a publication with two or more authors as inferior to, or representing a lower standard of quality than, a publication with a single author. In a multi-authored work, the order of authorship can often serve as a rough indicator of the relative contribution of each individual, with the first author typically conducting the majority of the work and subsequent authors contributing important but less extensive work. However, a trailing author (last author in a multi-authored publication) can indicate a substantive level of contribution. The convention of regarding first and last authors as major architects of a particular scholarly work is similar to that in the physical and natural sciences.

Licensure

Although publication has special importance in faculty evaluations of scholarship, the department emphasizes that there are other forms of scholarship that are valuable and comparable to peer-reviewed publications. For psychologists in applied fields (e.g., clinical, counseling, school), the psychology department regards achievement and maintenance of licensure as a necessary form of peer-reviewed professional activity, strongly recommended for tenure and required for promotion to full professor. Obtaining and maintaining licensure requires sustained involvement in one's field, with peer review coming in the form of clinical supervision, verification by other psychologists of one's clinical activity, state- and national-level exams, and review by a panel of psychologists at the state or national level. Maintaining licensure additionally requires ongoing continuing education. These activities enable applied psychologists to remain knowledgeable in their field, better equipped to teach applied psychology courses, and better equipped to advise students who are interested in graduate education in an applied area of psychology. Licensure by itself requires considerable time and effort and as a result, expectations for other forms of professional activity should be adjusted proportionally. Nevertheless, the department would consider the absence of peer-reviewed publications to be unacceptable, both for tenure and for further promotion.

Grant Writing

Another valued form of scholarship is application for and receipt of grants. Particularly common in the sciences, grant writing is a very time-consuming process requiring considerable expertise and insight into one's field. The process is usually discipline-specific, and individual research grant proposals (e.g., proposals to agencies such as NSF or NIH) face more stringent review process than those typically involved in journal publications because external funding is so competitive. Consequently, funded research grant proposals are indications of successful research programs, and the formative experience gained from submitting even a non-funded grant proposal could be at least as beneficial as that gained from the review process of a journal publication.

Participation in Professional Conferences and Meetings

Presentations, lectures, papers, posters, and workshops at regional, national, and international conferences and meetings are valuable forms of scholarship. Such presentations are ordinarily subject to peer review, and are an integral part of an ongoing research program, but do not carry the same weight as peer-reviewed publications. In general, presentations at national and international conferences are more prestigious than regional conferences.

Participation at conferences and meetings indicates that a faculty member is engaged in research that is open to critique by peers in the scientific community. At such events, faculty often present current research, typically in a poster or a talk, and solicit feedback from other psychologists. The department recognizes that such presentations are indicative of progress, as well as being an important means of staying current in one's field.

Moreover, invitations to present at a conference or institution might be especially prestigious. In fact, there are some conferences where an invitation to attend is a significant accomplishment — a recognition by one's peers of one's contribution to the field. Such an accomplishment should be carefully considered when weighing scholarly activity.

Activity in Professional Organizations

Active participation in professional organizations in psychology is also valued, as such participation engages the individual in the field beyond the boundaries of the campus community. Participating in a leadership role in local, national, and international organizations, either by election or by appointment, is recognized by the psychology department as an example of professional activity.

Editorial Activities

Editorships of professional journals and newsletters are worthy scholarly activities, however, not to the exclusion of pioneering work that furthers the knowledge base in one's field. Typically, editorial positions are held by faculty who are already recognized as major contributors in their field, and the College should recognize this achievement.

Reviews of Grants and Manuscripts

As with editorships, invitations to review grant proposals, manuscripts, and books are indicative of a level of accomplishment that the College will likely have already recognized. Nonetheless, the work involved in these reviews should be considered valuable scholarly activity.

Conclusions

In general, the department recognizes that individual faculty have differing strengths and resource requirements, and that the dedication to one's field manifests itself in various ways at various times in an individual's career. At some points in time, faculty members may have numerous presentations and fewer publications, or might have numerous publications and very few presentations, or might focus on advancing the field through research on pedagogy or writing textbooks, or might focus on research inspired by student interests rather than their primary area of research, or might focus on applied aspects of their field, etc. A professor can be very up-to-date in the field as a result of these ongoing activities. Evaluation of scholarship should therefore consider the full range of professional activity rather than a narrow definition of scholarship. The whole is sometimes more than the sum of the parts.