

Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Statement of discipline-specific scholarship guidelines (drafted 11/2010;
revised 4/2011)

General observations, intended for use by candidates for contract renewal, tenure, and promotion; by individuals writing letters on behalf of candidates; and by the Personnel Committee.

Faculty members in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures are expected to be actively involved in professional activity related to foreign languages, literatures, and/or cultures. Pertinent fields include (but are not limited to): literary studies (including literary history, critical theory, and comparative literature), linguistics, language pedagogy, translation studies, creative writing, or interdisciplinary studies (like gender studies, Asian studies, cultural studies, etc.).

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures concurs with the general principle stated in the Faculty Handbook (IV C.2) that the highest form of professional achievement is publication in peer-reviewed venues. However, we think it is equally important to acknowledge that scholarly activity can assume a wide range of valid forms and that, even within the area of peer-reviewed publications, specific practices can vary substantially. Therefore, candidates are advised that it is prudent to articulate in their Statement on Research precisely what scholarly standards characterize different publications. Notably, members of our department may be publishing in languages other than English, or in journals and collections edited outside the U.S. In these cases, it may be particularly important to make clear what standards apply.

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures also attaches substantial weight to the paragraph that concludes the explanation of "Excellence in Professional Activity" in the Faculty Handbook (IV C.2), concerning "activities such as the development of new areas of expertise" and the relationship between scholarly activity, "the candidate's teaching, and the mission of the College." Due to the nature of our discipline and the staffing structure in our department (everyone does everything!), teaching in Foreign Languages and Literatures routinely entails dealing with materials and approaches that have little immediate connection to the individual's area of research expertise. For this reason, the health of the Department depends on the willingness of its members to acquire additional areas of competence, whether or not those efforts immediately result in scholarly presentations or publications. In addition, we take seriously the College's commitment to student-faculty research and the principles outlined in the institutional mission statement. Therefore, professional activity that is undertaken with the intention of responding to these important components of the College's educational mission may merit special consideration. (For example, research involving students may be more time-consuming than independent projects; pursuit of such projects may therefore

slow scholarly production.) Here again, candidates are encouraged to make explicit in their statement on research those cases in which their scholarly activity is aimed at advancing institutional priorities and the ways in which their professional activities contribute in significant ways to their pedagogical development.

Prior to addressing specific categories of scholarly activity, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures would like to observe, finally, that the list of these categories in the Faculty Handbook reflects a hierarchical ranking. Candidates are therefore encouraged to explain with great care how activities beyond the requisite category of peer-reviewed publication (category a) contribute to their overall professional profile. For example, the editing of a scholarly journal would appear to fall under category d). However, it seems clear that this editorial activity could in many cases represent a more significant accomplishment (and a great commitment of time) than items falling under the preceding category. The explanations provided by the candidate—in conjunction with those coming from external references—will often be essential in helping the Personnel Committee to appreciate the quality and breadth of the individual's scholarly activity.

Categories of scholarly and artistic activity

In large part, these broad categories seem to require little clarification specific to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. As we have already noted, candidates will do well to explain individual cases, as appropriate. These specific cases might include cases of co-authorship, cases where peer-review is involved in ways that are not immediately evident (for example, conference proceedings might be subject to varying levels of review), or cases where seemingly routine activities might have a broader impact than is immediately apparent. In the list below, the categories themselves are taken from the Faculty Handbook (section IV.C.2); the brackets contain commentary from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

- a. Research and writing that appear in peer-reviewed publications, noteworthy performances or exhibitions, or other appropriate peer-reviewed professional activities in the candidate's field(s) of study.
- b. Peer-reviewed publication in related areas, including but not limited to, matters of pedagogy and curricular design.

[It should be noted that pedagogy covers an extremely broad range of activities, some of which may entail original research and critical thinking, as in the case of research on language acquisition and pedagogy. It might be noted, as well, that engagement in the pedagogical realm tends to enhance Whitman College's reputation as an institution characterized by excellence in undergraduate education; the candidate is, therefore, encouraged to describe the nature and context of activities in this area.]

- c. Non-peer reviewed publications and professional activity as defined in (a) and (b) above.

[Here again, this is a very broad category that could involve a large number of distinct activities. The publication of a study aimed at a popular audience, for example, may have a far-reaching effect and represent an original scholarly contribution.]

d. Active involvement in professional organizations.

[When such involvement entails something beyond mere membership, candidates are invited to elaborate on the importance of these activities.]

e. Participation in professional meetings and conferences, including presentations made with student co-authors.

f. The writing and submission of proposals for external grants.

[While not standard activity in the humanities, the submission of proposals for external grants can contribute significantly to scholarly activity, particularly when they aim to procure additional funding for a sabbatical research leave; thus, even an unfunded application—most humanities grants are extremely competitive—may lead the candidate to develop new areas of expertise or bring new opportunities and resources to the campus of Whitman College. In addition, it should be noted that procurement of an external grant substantially contributes to the reputation of our institution.]