

Scholarship Standards

School of Theology

Start Date: Spring 2021 (approved by Faculty Affairs spring 2021)

End Date: unspecified

Standards of Scholarship: School of Theology

The School of Theology (SOT) values all four kinds of faculty scholarship as defined in the *Faculty Handbook* (see 5.2.2.2). When making judgments about a colleague's professional development for rank and status, SOT considers the entire body of scholarly work, which ideally includes a variety of audiences and kinds. We also recognize that the content and trajectory of any colleague's body of work is shaped by personal choices that reflect a diversity of interests, talent, calling, vocational orientation, personal circumstance, and departmental emphasis. We recognize these choices are decisive in shaping the nature and trajectory of one's scholarly practices and product.

I. Principal Scholarly Products. The following are genre of scholarship apropos to the theological disciplines, ranked in rough order of their perceived importance within the academy as a measure of scholarly achievement and professional development.

- (1) Books (in order of importance): monograph/commentary, published dissertation, textbook or book for general and/or church audience, edited collection¹
- (2) Articles in peer reviewed, indexed (e.g., ATLA) journals²
- (3) Article-length contributions to edited collections (including dictionaries)
- (4) Articles in popular trade/clergy magazines (e.g., Christianity Today)
- (5) Shorter entries in dictionaries, handbooks, encyclopedias
- (6) Book reviews in peer reviewed journals

II. Other Scholarly Products.

- (1) Invited lectures at universities or professional meetings
- (2) Lessons (e.g., Lectio), sermons, editorials written for publication (online or print)
- (3) Curricula for classroom, church, workshops
- (4) Publications in social media, including blogs, computer programs, film/video/lyrics, CD/podcasts, and so on. While properly included in a body of one's scholarly work, the general quality of this scholarship in the theological disciplines is notably uneven and will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only as cued by the candidate's file.

III. Principal professional activities. In addition to a body of published scholarship, the following activities may supply additional evidence of a candidate's contribution as a scholar:

- (1) Leadership in a professional organization/society, including elected office or chairing an ongoing working group
- (2) Service on the editorial board of a journal or monograph series
- (3) Presentations at on-campus/regional/national/international conferences of scholars or clergy
- (4) Author of research grants or consultations that contribute to professional development
- (5) Other incidental activities, e.g., non-technical book reviews/notes written for magazines, journals, blogs, referee for a peer-reviewed journal

• **Collegial Review of a Candidate's Scholarship.** SOT will recommend a colleague for advancement in

rank and status based upon the rigorous review and careful judgment of peers. Our review of a

¹See the variety of scholarly productions listed in “faculty scholarly activities report” on Banner, especially the distinctions made regarding a book/article’s intended audience (e.g., general audience or scholarly, invited or peer-reviewed, etc.), which is assumed in this list.

²To guide peer review, each department in the SOT is encouraged to develop a list of peer-reviewed journals that each theological discipline generally regards as top, second, or third tier.

colleague's body of scholarship should not resort to a checklist of things done or numbers of publications included in a body of work. Rather the review of a body of scholarship by one's peers is an interpretive process and must be collegial as it is unbiased and fair-minded.

The endgame of peer review is the determination of whether the quality of one's entire body of scholarly contribution meets SOT's agreed upon standards. SOT faculty prize a multifaceted body of published work that includes different scholarly products written for different audiences and educational purposes, complemented by professional activity. A catalog of citations and reviews of one's work by other scholars, along with awards, invitations and other public recognitions, sometimes provide additional evidence that confirms the quality and contribution of one's scholarship to the discipline. The success of our students in graduate school or awards received by students for papers written under one's tutelage may also provide evidence of a contribution to the scholarship of others and should be noted by the candidate.

Although the overall quality a candidate's published work is paramount, we have established the following expectations of its quantity. (The prospective candidate will conference with the School dean to determine whether this quantitative standard has been met before submitting a file for review.)

(1) For tenure reviews, SOT expects a body of at least four published journal articles or its equivalent³. This body of published work should include at least two products (e.g., a published dissertation and journal article), which illustrate a candidate's potential for future published/presented scholarship apropos of SOT's educational mission and curriculum. Additionally, we expect that successful candidates for tenure actively participate in professional and church organizations that reflect their intellectual interests and research trajectory (see above under "principal professional activities").

(2) For promotion reviews, SOT expects a body of at least four journal articles or its equivalent³ published (or accepted for publication) since the candidate's prior promotion/placement in rank. For the rank of professor, for example, we would expect a total body of published work that consists of at least eight journal articles or its equivalent³, which together evinces the quality of scholarly work described above. We expect the successful candidate for promotion actively participates and routinely contributes (presentation, leadership) to groups of professional and church organizations.

In addition, candidates for tenure and promotion will include at least one letter (and preferably two) from a disciplinary peer at another institution who reviews the candidate's body of work. The purpose of this review is to provide written testimony that the candidate's body of work meets the standards of the status or rank sought. A list of possible external reviewers should be suggested by the candidate. The dean will choose reviewers at his or her discretion in conversation with the PDC.

• **Typology of the Productive Scholar.** The trajectory of one's professional development as a teaching scholar is monitored within SOT by the dean's annual assessment of one's current PDP. This mechanism insures that an agreed upon trajectory of intended research is ever before both colleague and dean.

³ *Subject to peer review*, the following metric is applied to a candidate's body of "Principal Scholarly Products": a monograph/commentary (published or in press) is equivalent to 3-6 articles, a dissertation (published or in press) to 2-3 articles, a textbook or book for a general audience (published or in press) to 2 articles, an edited collection to 1-2 articles. Articles to peer-reviewed journals or to editor-reviewed scholarly collections are equivalent. Articles in popular trade/clergy magazines, shorter entries to dictionaries, handbooks, encyclopedias, and books reviews in peer-reviewed journals are equivalent to up to a .5 article. Whilst we recognize that the inclusion of "Other Scholarly Products" (see above) enhances the total body of a candidate's published scholarship, the article-currency of any one piece listed, if not published elsewhere, is valued as no greater than a .5 article.

Productivity is carefully and fairly regulated in conversation with the dean in a way that targets benchmarks of promotion and status and prepares one's file for peer review.

There is no "typical" trajectory of research. We recognize that our work as scholars is organic and unfolds over time in response to any number of factors and concerns. At the same time, we expect each member of our School to demonstrate consistency of scholarly performance in developing the art and craft of one's scholarly contribution to peers and students. Practically, this expectation is articulated in the annual PDP, which must include at least one specific, measurable piece of research for the coming year. Details of this research must be indexed by an acceptable trajectory of research and accompanied by a self-critical review of the previous year's work. Often the shape and direction of this research will be driven by the research question of a long-range project, or perhaps by collaboration with other scholars that follows its own schedule, or by a practical problem related to pedagogy and the curriculum one teaches. These connections must also be described in the annual PDP and subjected to administrative review. We agree that faculty scholarship unfolds over time in a direction that targets some outcome SOT considers important and congruent with our work together.

The determination of whether a colleague's scholarship is sufficient for a tenured status or promotion in rank is, of course, the intended result of SOT's reviews whenever a colleague applies for a new status or promotion in rank. These advancements are not viewed by SOT faculty as entitlements, easily granted, but are based upon hard evidence provided by a colleague in one's application file. The timing of an application for promotion, unlike for tenure, will be cued by the SOT dean when a colleague has achieved a body of work apropos to the rank sought.

The *Faculty Handbook* notes and defines the critical "moments" that plot the professional development of university faculty. We assume that peer review at each of these moments will be collegial and fair-minded, and will follow a process that carefully evaluates and encourages a colleague's formation as a teaching scholar. The following are *minimum* expectations or "benchmarks," which when realized secure a colleague's eligibility to apply for tenure or promotion:

(1) **Pre-tenure review.** Scholarship standards that commend a colleague's continuance toward tenure include: (1) clear evidence, typically found in a graduate apprenticeship and initial publications, that a candidate has the talent and intention of meeting SOT's scholarly standards for tenure and the rank of Associate Professor (see below). (2) For those candidates at the rank of Assistant Professor, peer review will primarily concentrate on one's *potential* as a scholar as evinced by a detailed research program included in one's file and supported by a body of completed work often (but not necessarily) based upon one's graduate apprenticeship, including publication of one's PhD thesis. For this reason, often a letter from one's doctoral supervisor is helpful in framing a candidate's future as a scholar. (3) In addition, candidates should delineate the different ways in which one's research can be or has been adapted to the department's curriculum and the candidate's classroom experiences.

(2) **Tenure.** Scholarship standards that commend a colleague's tenure include: (1) attention paid to suggestions made for improvement at the time of one's pre-tenure review; (2) a narrative that clearly relates one's sense of vocation, integral to SPU's mission statement, with a research agenda apropos to one's theological discipline; (3) evidence of having completed the work described in the annual PDPs since pre-tenure review and work specifically called for by the review panel and/or dean at the time of that review; (4) One (or two) written evaluation(s) of the candidate's scholarship from a disciplinary peer at another institution must be included in the file. (5) Evidence found in faculty syllabi, handouts, or lecture notes and from student and peer reviews of teaching should demonstrate that one's scholarship is brought into the classroom in a manner that enhances student learning.

(3) **Associate Professor.** Scholarship standards that commend a colleague's promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor include: (1) Sufficient evidence of continuing development and productivity as a scholar beyond the rank of Assistant Professor as indexed by an annual review of one's PDP; (2) the promotion file must include a narrative that discusses how the candidate is cultivating a

distinctive “voice” or contribution to one’s discipline, which is normally supported by reference to a body of published research that makes or illustrates this contribution; and by (3) one (or two) written evaluation(s) of a candidate’s scholarship from a disciplinary peer at another institution who provides testimony that the body of work is apropos to this rank.

(4) *Professor*. The School’s recommendation for promotion to Professor requires a substantial body of published research beyond Associate Professor that meets the following standards: (1) evidence of continued productivity as a teaching scholar as indexed by an annual review of one’s PDP; (2) a body of published research that evinces candidate has made an important contribution to one’s academic discipline, confirmed in writing by two disciplinary peers included in the promotion file; and (3) evidence of the candidate’s senior role on campus that includes mentoring and collaborating with other colleagues and/or students in scholarly productions.⁴

⁴ A “senior” member of faculty is one (1) who exhibits a vital, growing Christian life (5.2.1.1) in service to the Church and the SPU community; (2) who understands and affirms of the goals of Christian Higher Education as pertains to the ongoing mission of SPU (5.2.1.2) ; (3) who models professionalism in ongoing mentorship of faculty and leadership both on campus and in the larger guild (5.2.1.3); and (4) who is exemplary in modeling and maintaining moral integrity (5.2.1.4).