# American University
# Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment Guidelines Updates

## *Resource 5*
## SCHOLARSHIP[1]

*In the interest of safeguarding academic freedom, which is valued by the university, DEI work in scholarship shall be rewarded but not mandated.*

**AU Equity Task Force Report 2020, p. 6**

The clarifying statement quoted above reminds us that updating TPR scholarship guidelines is not a zero-sum exercise. Committees can add new examples of scholarly excellence and adapt metrics to make room for previously undervalued DEI-attentive and cross-disciplinary work without diminishing the value of past and current scholarship in the discipline. In other words, "missing merit" in the scholarship domain can be discovered and recovered without having to bury other treasures in its place (Stewart and Valian 2018).

It is important to underscore that guidelines should never dictate what faculty study or create, who they work with, or how they undertake and disseminate their work. Instead, guidelines updates are meant to focus on the three core goals from *Resource 1*:
1. Expanding criteria for assessing teaching, service, and scholarship to recognize and reward inclusive and cross-disciplinary accomplishments which standard metrics tend to marginalize;
2. Ensuring academic freedom for all faculty by removing needless and discriminatory obstacles to the free choice of topics, themes, genres, methods, protocols, collaborators, and venues (etc.) for scholarship, teaching, and service;
3. Highlighting multiple pathways of excellence and impact for faculty.

Because scholarship standards are highly specific to each discipline, academic units will vary in their approaches to updating the scholarship sections of their guidelines. This resource offers:
- A basic framework (what-who-how) for thinking about dimensions of scholarship,
- Suggestions about cross-disciplinary scholarship, and
- Some questions to spur discussion with colleagues.

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[1] In this and related documents, the terms scholarly and scholarship always include research, creative, and professional activities and outputs, as per the *Faculty Manual's* glossary.

# Framework

*We will foster, support, and promote scholarship, research, and creative works that attend to diversity, equity, and inclusion, whether in intellectual content, theoretical frameworks, processes and methodology, analyses of data, participation of research teams and subjects, or engagement with the wider public.*

**Goal 2 of [AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence](#) Phase Two, p. 3**

When specifying what inclusive excellence and impact mean in the context of specific disciplines and fields, different academic units may choose to emphasize different dimensions of scholarship.

## WHAT?

The "What" dimension captures choice of topics, research questions, themes, motifs, etc. It is often the first thing that comes to mind when people talk about "DEI scholarship," but it is only one possibility. On average, a political scientist or performance artist will probably have more opportunities to pursue DEI-related *topics*[2] than a theoretical physicist or mathematician, to take just one example. Making room within TPR guidelines for such topics may therefore be more important in some disciplines than others: that is a decision for academic units to make.

The related, but distinct goal of making room within TPR guidelines to recognize and reward cross-disciplinary themes and topics is probably relevant to many, if not all, academic units. (See further discussion below.)

Committees might consider recognizing faculty creation of Open Educational Resources (OER)—teaching materials made available to all via the internet—as a form of scholarly output in tenure and promotion guidelines. Please see *Resource 10* for a discussion.

## WHO?

The "Who" dimension focuses broadly on the people—including research personnel, subjects, audience, etc.—involved in or affected by the scholarly or creative endeavor. This dimension has clear relevance for all fields, disciplines, and academic units. Signposts of inclusive excellence in this dimension include attention to:
- Who is initiating/organizing/envisioning the work, which refers to the diversity of the research or creative team and inclusion of students, international collaborators, and/or AU term faculty.

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[2] Examples of such topics include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, intersectional identity, religion, power, privilege, barriers facing minoritized groups, disparities in outcomes, civil and human rights, means of correcting inequities and injustices, among many others.

- Whose lives will potentially be affected by the work, which includes plans for human-subjects research: do they incorporate diverse sampling and participation of affected and interested community members at every stage of project planning and execution?
- Who has access to the results of the research and creative work, which may include multi-dimensional approaches to dissemination, including presentations and performances in atypical venues and publication on open-source platforms.

Guidelines can be updated to recognize and reward diversification of teams and methods, breadth of participation, and inclusive dissemination of results.

Please see *Resource 10* for helpful ideas from the University Library about open-access publishing.

**HOW?**

This broad dimension also has relevance to every field, discipline, and academic unit. Following are some examples of inclusive approaches to "the how" of scholarship:
- Theory
    - Theory building that incorporates intellectual and creative contributions of scholars who have been historically and unfairly marginalized
    - Participatory approaches that include community members in theory building and/or choice of theories to be applied
- Project Design, Methodology, and Settings
    - Artistic expression and cultural production that reflects culturally diverse communities or underrepresented voices
    - Contributions to emerging genres in fiction, drama, and other arts
    - Participatory approaches that include community members in research design or in plans for creative production
    - Agreements that ensure equal distribution of any benefits from an experimental intervention after the data has been gathered
    - Research that credits all contributors, including those who provide labor, ideas, or are the objects of study
    - Project designs that support economic diversity by overcoming barriers to participation faced by individuals from underserved and under-resourced communities
    - Research that applies non-standard design, sampling, or choice of experimental participants: e.g., Black Feminism, Race Theories, Critical Gender Theories, Intersectionality Theory, Socio-Cultural Theory, etc.
- Approaches to Data Analysis
    - In human-subjects research, attention to understanding what outliers might tell us about the phenomenon being studied, beyond measures of central tendency
    - Application of complexity principles to emergent social trends

- Participatory forms of analysis that invite subjects of research to engage directly with the data

## Cross-Disciplinary Work

As noted in *Resource 1*, AU's Strategic Plan aspires to advance "AU's overall reputation as an institution that cultivates top-flight, cross-disciplinary research" to address "the most significant issues of the present and future" (pp. 13, 19). With that goal in mind, a subcommittee of the strategic plan implementation working group proposed revisions to multiple sections of the *Faculty Manual* to include cross-disciplinary/cross-field scholarship on a par with discipline or field-specific scholarship (see bullet points below for details). The purpose of the *Faculty Manual* revisions was to create space for cross-disciplinary work, but not to require it, so that faculty can advance in their careers at the same pace regardless of whether they focus on a single field or sub-field and/or choose to span fields/disciplines. The revisions were approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees in Spring 2020.

TPR guideline committees are asked to check their own guidelines to ensure cross-disciplinary work is recognized. Some academic units may want to insert "and/or cross-disciplinary" where applicable in their guidelines, as illustrated below from the *Faculty Manual*:
- Associate Professors (and Term Associate Professors) are expected to achieve "significant scholarly accomplishments appropriate to the field ***and/or significant cross-disciplinary achievements***" (8.a.iii., ~p. 25; 13.b.ii., ~p. 47).
- Professors (and Term Professors) are expected to demonstrate "excellent scholarship, including prominent accomplishments in the field ***and/or in cross-disciplinary endeavors***" (8.a.iv., ~p. 25; 13.b.iii, ~p. 47).
- Term faculty who hold the highest rank in the professorial lecturer sequence, Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer/Librarian, "will have demonstrated meritorious performance through sustained excellence in teaching and in service internally to the university and/or externally in their profession or field of scholarship, ***or through cross-disciplinary achievements***" (13.a.iv., ~p. 46).
- When faculty members review files for action submitted by colleagues, they are expected to determine "if a candidate's performance contributes significantly to the field ***and/or generates cross-disciplinary knowledge and insights*** in the case of faculty whose appointments require research and raise the academic quality of the university" (11, ~p. 38).
- "[C]urrency in the field ***and/or across fields***" is a core expectation for all term faculty in all ranks (15, ~p. 50).

# Discussion Questions to Expand Perspectives

Committees may want to arrange meetings with small groups of colleagues to crowd-source ideas. Here are some potential discussion topics, in no particular order.

**Do your current guidelines tend to exclude any forms of excellence?**

Ask faculty to share ideas about how your unit's current guidelines might marginalize or undervalue some populations of scholars, areas and types of scholarship, or methods of scholarship within your discipline, including both DEI-attentive and cross-disciplinary work. This question invites faculty to reflect deeply on the reasons for updating the scholarship guidelines and may stimulate ideas for constructive revisions. In these conversations, try to drill down to specifics about what and who is being excluded, and how. Look for areas of "missing merit" ([Stewart and Valian 2018](#)).

Identifying hidden sources of bias is very difficult without fresh perspectives and different vantage points. Including a diversity of voices in these conversations will help.

**Are metrics an issue in your guidelines?**

The Equity Task Force noted that using exclusively quantitative metrics to assess scholarly quality—e.g., journal-level metrics such as citation counts, impact factors, or acceptance rates, and author-level metrics such as h-index scores—may exclude some forms of scholarly excellence. To address this gap, units can adopt, for example:

- DEI-specific metrics
- Non-citation metrics, such as downloads or views – these may be appropriate in low-citing or non-citing fields
- Qualitative assessment of a monograph or a journal's standing by external reviewers of faculty files.

Such practices may expand the academic unit's familiarity with smaller and more specialized journals doing excellent work in areas traditionally overlooked by well-known, highly ranked journals. Multi-dimensional assessment also may accord greater recognition to open-source publishing; publishing of monographs with small, emerging presses; and public forms of communication via media outlets, blogs, etc. External reviewers can be asked to assess the significance of these forums directly.

Please see *Resource 9* for helpful ideas from the University Library about impact metrics.

**What are the trends in your discipline or related clusters of disciplines?**

Are the editorial boards of your discipline's journals becoming more diverse? Are national and international disciplinary associations talking about how to reduce bias and improve equity? If so, what new ideas are coming forth from your discipline, and how might your academic unit

incorporate those ideas into your updated guidelines? How can your academic unit help lead change beyond AU?

**What changes do your colleagues already have in mind?**

Some colleagues may have been thinking for years about how their field or discipline could and should expand beyond "mainstream, conventional, established" topics, genres, theoretical frameworks, research designs, etc. to support intellectual pluralism and encourage traditional and non-traditional, intra- and cross-disciplinary breakthroughs (Equity Task Force Report, p. 4). Consulting widely with colleagues in your unit may surface many promising ideas.

**Are the following bits of career advice common in your academic unit? If so, do they point to areas where change is needed?**

- *"Wait until you reach Full Professor before doing inter-disciplinary research because only low-impact journals will publish it."*
- *"Don't focus too much on race, ethnicity, or gender in your scholarship if you want to be hired in a mainstream department."*
- *"Community-based research and creative work is nice, but it's not rigorous enough or original enough to fully count as scholarship."*
- *"Translating your work for non-academic audiences is nice, but don't let it slow down your academic productivity."*
- *"Beware of open-access publishing because the peer review process is inferior."*
- *"To increase your chances of being published, follow the trends in the top journals, presses, and other academic outlets. Don't stray too far from the center of intellectual gravity."*
- *"Make sure to collaborate only with colleagues who already have strong publishing records."*
- Etc.

Discussion might focus on a few sub-questions: Which of the statements above are most common and most problematic in the disciplines and fields represented by your academic unit? How can your updated TPR guidelines contribute to changing these types of self-reinforcing biases while at the same time encouraging innovation and fresh thinking in your academic unit's scholarly sphere?