

To: Susanmarie Harrington, President
SLA Faculty Assembly
From: SLA Committee on Research
Date: April 21, 2005

In response to a motion approved at the 01/28/05 meeting of the Assembly, the Agenda Council appointed an ad hoc committee on research and charged it to consider questions concerning academic editing, applied research, and the scholarship of teaching. The specific charges included examining points 6 and 7 on page 8 of the version of the SLA Promotion and Tenure Guidelines approved at the January meeting of the Assembly and considering whether, for the guidance of candidates and reviewers, those points might be clarified or elaborated. As its initial response, the committee suggests that point 6, concerning academic editing, be revised and expanded; that point 7, concerning applied research, be revised slightly (we anticipate that this will be uncontroversial); and that the Assembly approve an additional point, point 8, concerning the scholarship of teaching. These are independent suggestions that should be considered separately.

1. Academic Editing

Point 6 on page 8 currently reads:

6. Academic editing may be offered as another example of scholarly activity. While there is a range of academic editing, that which requires sustained research and original or critical activity constitutes basic research. Editing in the academy can include scholarly editing of primary texts, the editing of learned journals, anthologies, reference books and similar activities.

Suggested revision/expansion:

6. Academic editing consists of a wide range of activities. Those editing activities that require the expertise of an academic specialist and contribute to the advancement of knowledge may be offered under the heading of *research* (usually *basic* research). Editing in the academy can include scholarly editing of primary texts, editing of learned journals, anthologies, and reference works, and similar activities.

When candidates for promotion or tenure offer academic editing as *research*, they should provide clear descriptions of the types of editorial activities they propose to classify as research and, when feasible, should provide reviewers with samples of the products of those activities. Suitably qualified reviewers should comment on the level of academic expertise necessary to perform the activities and should evaluate the contributions made by the activities to the advancement of knowledge.

Three comments:

(1) It's more to the point to say that academic editing may be offered as *research* than to say that it may be offered as *scholarly activity*. Campus thinking and the terminology of campus documents are heavily influenced by Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*, in which "research" is only one of four forms of "scholarship." The purpose of point 6 is to affirm that academic editing may be offered, in Boyer's terms, as the "scholarship of discovery" (which Boyer also calls "research"), not just as the "scholarship of application" (Boyer's term for "professional service").

(2) In the first paragraph of the proposed revision of point 6, the language being replaced – "requires sustained research and original or critical activity" – is holdover language from earlier editions of the Guidelines, not language newly approved at the Assembly's 01/28/05 meeting. The language to be substituted serves two purposes (besides obviating the need to clarify "requires sustained research"): (a) it excludes activities that might be performed by those without advanced degrees (for example, by the non-faculty working in some of the scholarly editions), even though such activities do contribute to the success of editorial projects and (thereby) to the advancement of knowledge; and (b) it helps to

explain why the activities constitute *research* rather than (or in addition to) *professional service*: it's because such activities not only involve the application of academic expertise – which they have *in common* with professional service – but also contribute to the advancement of knowledge – which is not part of the *definition* of professional service. (If desired, the committee's spokesperson will explain at the upcoming meeting of the Assembly why the committee believes that the paragraph straddling pages 22 and 23 of the new edition of the campus guidelines does not require us to view academic editing as professional service.)

(3) The second paragraph of the proposed revision offers guidance to P&T candidates concerning the presentation of their editing and guidance to departments concerning the nature of the (external and departmental) reviews of editing that will be expected by school-level reviewers.

2. **Applied Research**

Point 7 on Page 8 currently reads:

7. Applied research may be offered as another example of scholarly activity. While there is a broad range of applied research, that which requires sustained research and original or critical activity constitutes basic research; see the Guidelines for Applied Research (Section VIII).

Suggested revision:

7. Applied research may be offered under the heading of *research*. See Section VIII, Guidelines for Evaluating Applied Research.

Comments: (1) For the reason given in comment (1) on point 6, it's more to the point to say that applied research may be offered as *research* than to say that it may be offered as *scholarly activity*. (2) As noted by the Agenda Council, it sounds paradoxical to say that some applied research constitutes basic research. With the concurrence of Phil Scarpino, who proposed the version of point 7 that was approved by the Assembly, we propose that the sentence in question simply be deleted. It's sufficient to affirm explicitly that applied research may be offered as *research* (which is not in dispute within the school) and to refer readers to section VIII, Guidelines for Evaluating Applied Research.

3. **Scholarship of Teaching**

There is a need for guidance on which publications **on teaching** should be regarded as *teaching* publications and which may be regarded as *research* publications. The committee recommends that the following language be added as *point 8* on page 8 of the SLA Promotion and Tenure Guidelines.

8. Publications concerning teaching are viewed as *research* when they meet the methodological and analytical standards expected of research publications. Examples of publications appropriately classified as research, when such standards are met: significant contributions to the theory of teaching and learning; reports and analyses of soundly designed and conducted experiments; and rigorous conceptual studies. Examples of publications that typically are viewed as *teaching* publications: suggestions for improving teaching and learning; brief reflections on the roles and challenges of teachers; and descriptions of innovative courses, strategies, or techniques.