

# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## WORKING GROUP ON CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

### MEMBERS

Charles H. Hollenberg, Vice-Provost (Health Sciences) Chairman

John Britton, Department of Geography

J. Barry French, Engineering/School of Graduate Studies

Paul Gooch, Philosophy, Scarborough College

Ann Lancashire, English/University College

Katherine Packer, Faculty of Library and Information Science

Robert Salter, Department of Surgery/Hospital for Sick Children

Michael Mouritsen Executive Assistant to the Vice-Provost, Secretary

## HOLLENBERG REPORT ON CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Working Group on Creative Professional Activity was established by the Provost in July of 1983, with the following terms of reference:

1. to consider the role of creative professional activity as a criterion used in assessing candidates for initial appointment to the University, and in assessing faculty members for merit increases, award of tenure, and promotion in academic rank;
2. to define the scope of the term in the context of the above academic personnel decisions; and
3. to develop principles to guide divisions in establishing detailed guidelines for the application of this criterion within a particular Department, School, College, or Faculty.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The established criteria on which faculty members are assessed for initial appointment, merit increases, tenure and promotion are :

- a) scholarly/research achievement and/or creative professional activity;
- b) quality and effectiveness in teaching; and
- c) University and professional service, including administrative contributions.

References to creative professional activity appearing in current University policies (on appointments, merit increases, tenure and promotions) have been summarized in Appendix A to this Report.

There is a fair degree of University-wide consensus on the necessity for documenting and evaluating scholarship/research, teaching and service, and the definitions of these activities are clearly articulated in current policies. The category of creative professional activity, however, is neither clearly defined nor accepted on a University-wide basis, and difficulties arise because a number of University disciplines, especially in the professional Faculties, but including some in Arts and Science, find it essential to recruit and to reward faculty members with strengths and expertise in professional or clinical practice, or artistic endeavour, but who may lack the usual academic qualifications of higher degrees and publications in refereed journals.

Problems have arisen from attempts to assess such individuals according to conventional academic criteria, and widely divergent practices have developed in the absence of central, University-wide guidelines.

Creative professional activity, in the University's current policies, is seen as a parallel, equivalent and clearly alternative criterion to that of traditional scholarly achievement or conventional research work. Assessment of professional activity, of course, like assessment of scholarship/research, must be accompanied by assessment of the other two categories, viz., teaching and service, both of which should be documented and evaluated in the usual way. In other words, where assessment of creative professional activity is warranted by the nature of the contribution and the purpose of the appointment, professional practice is but one criterion, to be supplemented by the usual evaluation, as well, of teaching and service. It might also be appropriate, for some individuals, to evaluate both creative professional activity and research contributions, along with teaching and service. It is not assumed that creative professional activity and traditional academic scholarship are mutually exclusive, or that they cannot manifest themselves in the same individual.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT A DEFINITION

A number of divisions in the University have developed definitions of creative professional activity. These were reviewed in 1981 by a Decanal Committee in the Graduate School on graduate professional education, chaired by Professor E. A. McCulloch. The McCulloch Committee's Report recommended a definition of creative professional activity to guide future appointment of faculty members to the graduate school.

## COMPONENTS OF THE DEFINITION

After careful review of previous work, and of current University policies, the Working Group identified three general headings under which creative professional activity might be classified and assessed. We have considered whether or not to weight the three components, i.e., whether the three parts of the definition should be given equal weight, or whether there should be a hierarchy, with one component having a higher value than the other. This determination, in our view, should not be done on a University-wide level, but is best left to the divisions. Depending on the Divisional use for which creative professional activity is being assessed, it may well be appropriate to specify, for example, that achievement in any one component may not be sufficient, or that one component is more important than another.

Further, the Working Group feels strongly that mere competence in creative professional activity, as a whole, should never be sufficient for any of the career decisions (i.e., appointment, promotion, tenure or merit). We are aware, however, that current tenure policy permits the award of tenure for demonstrating excellence in either research or teaching, with clearly-established competence in the other category. We believe that, in the category of creative professional activity, above-average performance should be expected of a candidate at all stages of his or her career.

### 1. PROFESSIONAL INNOVATION/CREATIVE EXCELLENCE

Separate definitions are appropriate for the creative and performing arts and for other professions.

- a) Creative excellence in the arts, including excellence in performance, requires sustained activity which is judged excellent by peer review and establishes the artist's reputation for excellence within and outside the University. Judgment should be made with reference to appropriate awards and prizes; invited performances, stagings and exhibitions; wide public recognition.
- b) Professional innovation consists of an invention and/or development of a technical or conceptual innovation that has an influence on the practice of the profession, and that is published, publicized, or otherwise recognized in a way that makes possible its evaluation by practitioners, both in the field and in university faculties

Timing was noted as an important variable in assessing this category of achievement. It might take much longer for a contribution in this category of creative professional activity to gain recognition, and for evidence to become available for peer review, than for a scholarly article, which reports the results of a research project, to be refereed and published.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

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How does professional innovation differ from conventional research accomplishment? In fundamental terms, the difference is only in the form of output, not in the method of measurement. In every case, evidence of originality, excellence, and importance to the field is sought.

Whereas conventional scholarship takes the form of books, chapters in books, articles in refereed journals, invited addresses to scholarly meetings, and other published reports of research, professional innovation | creative excellence is expressed in performance, film, and exhibition or staging of a work of art, original architectural or engineering design, original clinical or therapeutic techniques, introduction of an original concept in approaching a professional problem, etc.

These examples of work, of course, require assessment, and as with conventional scholarship, these assessments should be solicited from one's peers, with stature, outside the University, in addition to internal collegial review.

It should be stressed that creative professional activity and scholarly research are not considered to be mutually exclusive and, indeed, that publications and addresses to conferences or professional meetings would often form part of a candidate's original contributions.

## 2. EXEMPLARY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Exemplary practice is that which is fit to be emulated and has been emulated; illustrative to students and peers; practice which establishes the professional as an exemplar, or role-model, for his or her profession; a practice showing the individual to be a professional whose behaviour, style, ethics, standards, and method of practice are such that students, clients, and peers should be exposed to them and encouraged to emulate them.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

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How is one recognized as a role-model? The best source of evidence would be letters of appraisal from peers including colleagues inside the University but particularly from those outside the University; and also from former and present students, clients (if appropriate) and members of other professions who interact with the candidate. Such assessments should be specific in nature, and should be solicited from a number of individuals selected by both the candidate and the reviewing body or individual. Referees should be asked to apply the above definition in drafting their appraisals. It is also important that the stature and status of the appraisers be indicated, along with the nature and duration of their professional association with the candidate, because the weight given an assessment of exemplary practice will depend to a considerable degree on the professional reputation of the appraiser, and his/her relationship with the candidate.

## 3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

In this category, as in the others, demonstration of innovation and exemplary practice would be expected, but in the form of leadership in the profession or in professional societies, associations, organizations, that has influenced standards and/or enhanced the effectiveness of the discipline. Such leadership or professional development might manifest itself in many ways: contributions to public policy, changing of professional certification, the authorship or editorship of studies or reports for government bodies, the founding or re-

organization of a professional society or association with a resultant impact on professional practice or delivery of service.

Membership and the holding of office in professional associations is not, in and of itself, considered evidence of creative professional activity. Sustained leadership, as defined above, and setting of standards for the profession, are the principal criteria to be evaluated. Again, both internal and external assessment should be sought.

## USE OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY AS A CRITERION IN DECISIONS

The objective in developing University-wide guidelines for the assessment of creative professional activity is to encourage consistency in the application of this criterion, but it is assumed that the forms of activity will vary at different stages in an individual's career.

For example, for initial appointment to the University, professional qualifications and assurance of unusual and above-average professional competence (i.e., exemplary professional practice) would be major considerations; expectation of professional innovation and standard-setting or of innovative contributions to developments in professional practice, would be premature for a junior appointee. Potential for, or future promise of, such innovation/creativity, should, however, be taken into consideration. For assessment by the Chair or Dean for annual merit increments, all aspects of creative professional activity, along with teaching and service, must be considered, and as a faculty member progresses through his or her career there would be an expectation of a growing body of such work to be evaluated.

In evaluation of candidates for the three-year tenure review, the final tenure review, and promotion in rank, all of the components of creative professional activity should be assessed. With respect to the tenure decision: just as Reading Committees are required for traditional scholarship, similar committees could be struck to assess creative professional activities and could report to the Tenure Committee in the same manner as the Reading Committee and the Teaching Committee.

Finally, it is our view that creative professional activity is an appropriate category for assessment for faculty members in both the professorial and tutor streams.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the University delegate to divisions the responsibility for developing specific criteria and documentation requirements consistent with the University-wide definition for use whenever creative professional activity is assessed, viz., initial appointment to the University, awarding merit increments to salary, three-year probationary review in the tenure-stream, Tenure Review, appointment to the Graduate Faculty and promotion in academic rank.
2. That divisions be requested to report such guidelines to the Vice-President and Provost.