May 29, 2018

From: International Relations faculty

To: POLS department faculty

Re: Memo of shared understanding of research as a component in the evaluation of faculty in the International Relations subfield.

The IR faculty (Avdan, Carter, Omelicheva and Webb) met to discuss P&T guidelines per Dr. Haider-Markel’s charge, on 30 April, 2018. What follows is the summary of our collective response to the questions.

1. How do you rate refereed journal publications?

We decided on a three-tier grouping of academic journals: top-, middle-, and low-tier. The top tier includes about 25 prominent political science and international relations journals (APSR, AJPS, ISQ, JCR, ISR, etc.). The medium-tier is composed of a larger group (about 50) of political science, IR, issue-specific, and regional journals (e.g., PSQ, PRQ, Human Rights Quarterly, Terrorism and Political Violence, Post-Soviet Affairs, etc.). Examples of the low-tier journals include Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Social Science Journal, Asian Survey, and others. These journals are characterized by lower impact factor (or no impact factor at all), very broad inter-disciplinary focus, and/or narrow country/region specialization.

The group agreed that these tiers need to be regularly reviewed and updated.

To be able to make comparisons across different quantities of articles across these tiers, we suggest the following scale:

1 top tier article = 2 mid-tier articles = 4 low-tier articles

1 mid-tier article = 2 low tier articles

An IR faculty member seeking promotion with tenure at KU and pursing an “articles track” should strive to publish:

1. one top tier article (solo- or 2 authors), plus no less than 2 mid-tier articles (solo-authored or with a co-author); or
2. A combination of 2-3 mid-tier and 4-6 low-tier articles (solo-authored or with a co-author).
3. How do you rate books relative to articles?

We ranked book publisher into high-, middle-, and low-tiers. The top tier is represented by about 10 presses, including Yale, Harvard, Cornell, Oxford, and Princeton. The mid-tier presses are more diverse and include academic publishers (e.g., Penn State) and non-academic popular presses, such as Lynne Reiner and Routledge. The low-tier presses are mostly non-academic presses, such as Ashgate, Praeger, presses of international organizations and think tanks (UN, US Institute of Peace), and less known international presses (e.g. Verlag, etc.).

For the purpose of comparability with articles, we weighted published books in the following way:

1 top-tier book= 2 top tier articles = 4 mid-tier articles

1 mid-tier book=1 top tier articles = 2 mid-tier articles=4 low tier articles

1 low-tier book=2 low tier articles

Edited collections are evaluated among mid- and low-tier publications, although thematic (field-shaping) publications solicited by top presses (e.g., Oxford Handbook, etc.) are encouraged.

Junior faculty should be advised to not work on the textbooks at the expense of their work on other academic publications (articles and monographs). Textbooks will also be ranked among mid- and low-tier publications depending on the press and reviews.

An IR faculty seeking promotion with tenure at KU and pursing a “book track” should strive to publish, at the minimum:

1. A top tier book (1-2 authors) and 2 mid-tier articles or 4 low-tier articles;
2. A mid-tier book (1-2 authors) and 4 mid-tier articles
3. Co-authored and solo-authored works.

We agreed that co-authorship should be encouraged and works co-authored with one more author should be counted as single-authored. With three or more authors, the candidate should explain the extent of his/her contribution to the article/book (substantively as well as a percentage of total contribution).

1. Grants sought and/or received

At the junior level, large external grants ($100K or more) are not a requirement for P&T. The junior faculty should be advised to only pursue time-consuming applications once they are confident in securing the minimal number of publications necessary for promotion.

We recognize the time and effort put into the preparation of a competitive grant application and agree they should be recognized as part of contribution to research. Every completed and submitted application for grants, like, NSF, NEH, DoD-funded grants, etc. ($100K+) should be counted as a mid-tier article, regardless of its status (funded or not). The funded applications can be considered as a top- or mid-tier article depending on the breadth and length of the research program as reflected in funding.

1. Book chapters

We view book chapters as secondary research projects to articles and book monographs. While they demonstrate research engagement, on their own book chapters would not suffice for the tenure. Junior faculty should only engage in book chapter projects when they offer a close fit with their research agenda and do not require onerous time investment for gathering data and writing them. Peer-reviewed chapters in field-shaping edited volumes (as evidenced from reviews) can be equivalent to mid- or low-tier articles.

1. Public Engagement and Service publications

IR scholars increasingly use multiple forms of communication to engage broader audiences with their research and contribute policy-relevant recommendations on how to approach the pressing issues of global politics and foreign policy. These public engagements not only increase the visibility of a faculty’s research and connect research findings to broader policy debates, but they also highlight the relevancy of academic enterprise to the public and policy makers. Thus, we believe public engagement and service publications are an important part of scholarly excellence.

We also believe that multiple opportunities for community-engaged research, teaching, and service enacted in scholarly ways should be considered and evaluated as part of evidence for P&T (if the scholar chooses to engage in these activities).

While leaving out service publications and public engagement from faculty’s work should not penalize one’s prospects for promotion and tenure, if the faculty chooses to engage in these activities, they should be recognized, reviewed, and rewarded.

To assess the quality of research-based public engagements, we suggest the following criteria. First, the type of content (policy memo, opinion editorial, explanatory journalism) and whether it is grounded in IR theory and research. Second, how rigorous the writing is and whether it has been peer-reviewed (e.g., by an editor). Third, public impact that can be gauged by a variety of measures (citations, views, integration of insight into policy, etc.).

While public engagement alone does not land tenure, it can strengthen the faculty’s profile.

1. Other evidence of research productivity

While we acknowledge the importance of the journals’ and presses’ impact factor in evaluating one’s scholarly impact, we also would like to consider the number of citations as an additional metric for gauging published research.