

Scholarship in Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs

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Composition studies has evolved in the past twenty-five years into a recognized discipline with its own conventions for research and publication, its own scholarly standards and expectations, and its own procedures for reviewing the work of the discipline (through professional organizations, meetings, and journals). Composition research has been characterized since the beginning by its diversity, drawing on several fields of study and many methods of investigation. Because of this diversity, and because composition research has reached outside the traditional methods of literary studies, CCCC felt it important to prepare a statement describing the range of scholarly activity in composition.

- Composition research is characteristically interdisciplinary. It draws on work from a variety of fields--literacy studies, classical and modern rhetoric, cognitive psychology, the history of instructional practices, studies in pedagogy, work in computer assisted instruction and artificial intelligence, and studies in linguistics and communication. And it has taken as its subject the production, exchange, and reception of texts in a variety of settings. It is concerned, that is, with reading and writing instruction at all levels, but also with the practice and uses of writing both inside and outside the academy, particularly in settings not traditionally a part of literary studies--writing in the workplace, writing in the public arena (political speeches and public documents), writing in the schools or other institutional settings, writing in the home (letters, journals, autobiographies), and writing as it is practiced in the academic disciplines.
- An individual's work may necessarily be diverse and may necessarily be published in academic journals cutting across traditional academic boundaries. For an example of the scope and range of composition research, see the Longman Bibliography (New York: Longman, Inc., 1988 Erika Lindemann, editor).
- Much important work done in this field is observational and experimental. It involves human subjects and a variety of methods drawn from the social sciences, from ethnographic observations to experimental procedures requiring statistical analysis.
- It is common for authors of theoretical or experimental papers to consider the pedagogical, social, or political implications of their findings. The discipline has traditionally used the classroom and student writing as material for the study of more general problems in language use and language development. In addition, it has traditionally valued projects that move back and forth between theoretical discussion and practical application. Many journals, in fact, insist that articles be written to illuminate or comment on current practice in the classroom, in our institutions, or, more generally, in the culture.
- The discipline recognizes many ways of presenting important new work in composition. Some innovative textbooks, computer software and programs, and curricular development, for example, represent primary means of communicating the results of extensive research. Such means of conducting research and formulating theory require considerable investments of time, imagination, expertise, and energy. When they meet appropriate standards of scholarship, therefore, they should carry appropriate credit in tenure and promotion review.
- A significant percentage of the scholarship in composition studies is being conducted and reported collaboratively. Collaborative work, while having a long tradition in many disciplines, should be respected as a legitimate and appropriate form of professional scholarly activity. Junior faculty in composition are often given extensive administrative responsibility for instructional staff, budgets, and programs (often under the following titles: Writing Program Administrator, Director of Composition, Director of Writing, Director of Freshman English, Director of the Writing Center, Director of Teaching Assistants, etc.). When hiring in this field, departments generally seek qualities of leadership and administrative accomplishment, since the composition program depends on the effectiveness of those who direct its various components. These administrative duties may result in lower scholarly productivity than in beginning faculty members without comparable administrative responsibilities. In fairness, then, administrative contributions should be given significant weight during tenure and salary reviews. Indeed, during these reviews, outside evaluators

might be asked to study the applicant's administrative service and this review could be considered alongside reviews of research and reports on teaching.

- Given the nature of this field, much of its important work is dependent on forms of dissemination that are, in fact, not "published." One such form is conducting workshops, through which other members of the discipline are introduced to new developments in the field. Departments should recognize the importance of these activities and reward colleagues who conduct seminars for faculty from other universities or from primary and secondary schools (K-12).

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