

Complete Policy Title:
**Assessing Candidates Whose Work Is
Multi-Disciplinary**

Policy Number (if applicable):

Approved by:
Senate Committee on Appointments

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Responsible Executive:
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

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There are many scholars who consider their research to involve more than one discipline. They describe their work as inter-/or multi-disciplinary. Recently, questions have been raised about the way in which the Senate Committee on Appointments (SCA) should carry out the assessment of such cases for tenure and promotion. We believe that *The 1992 McMaster University Revised Policy and Regulations With Respect to Academic Appointment, Tenure and Promotion* (the "yellow document") provides fully sufficient criteria and procedures that apply equally to the assessment of faculty in inter-/or multi-disciplinary work and to the evaluation of faculty in single disciplines.

Where the faculty member is appointed to a single Department, it is the responsibility of the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty (and where the faculty member participates in a Program, the Director of the Program), to prepare a list of referees. The "yellow document" directs that the referees be "known for their work in the relevant field(s)" (III.12). This requirement accommodates individuals whose work is in more than one field or discipline. Scholars whose work is inter-/or multi-disciplinary identify, by definition, with more than one discipline or field and it is appropriate that referees be selected from among the fields represented in the scholar's fields of interest. In all cases, candidates for tenure and promotion are subject to review by "arm's length" referees. The procedures for the selection of referees (III.12) also provide the opportunity for the candidate to comment on the appropriateness of the referees being considered and to object to any of the referees recommended.

Inter-or/multi-disciplinary research does not signify work that evades a basis in a discipline; rather it draws from more than one discipline. Some inter-/or multi-disciplinary

areas are well-established; in such cases the selection of referees presents no greater challenge than in any other case. Where the inter-/or multi-disciplinary area is not well-established, however, the task of selecting appropriate referees can be more difficult. Nevertheless, in such instances, the candidate will have a focus in a well-accepted field and there will be experts capable of assessing the individual's contribution in a newer or emerging field(s).

Those who work in a particular inter-/or multi-disciplinary mode do not do research in isolation, but form part of a community with similar scholarly interests. In seeking promotion to full professorship these candidates must fulfill the requirement of candidates working in a single discipline, namely, that they "shall be known on the basis of high quality scholarship" (III.21). Similarly, in cases of tenure and promotion to associate professorship, those in inter-/or multi-disciplinary areas are assessed by peers who attest "to the high quality of the candidate's work" (III.10).

In summary, just like single field candidates, faculty in inter-/or multi-disciplinary studies must publish in peer-reviewed journals, seek grants, contribute to scholarly conferences and university seminars, give exhibitions or performances according to their areas, win academic awards, be assessed by "arm's length" referees and contribute to new knowledge. Inter-/or multi-disciplinary work is judged by the criteria set out in the "yellow document" and in that sense is no different from the case of single field assessment.