

Resent-From: faculty@geog.ubc.ca
From: Graeme Wynn <wynn@geog.ubc.ca>
Subject: Annual reviews and merit process
Date: May 1, 2007 4:11:22 PM PDT
To: faculty@geog.ubc.ca
 1 Attachment, 52.0 KB

Dear colleagues: I have just completed the annual review process and the associated long report and set of recommendations regarding merit and PSA awards. These have been lodged in the Dean's Office on deadline.

I would like to thank everyone for participating in this process. The annual reports and meetings are of considerable value to me in keeping me abreast of the many things that busy colleagues are doing and providing me with your ideas about the state of the department and about "things" that I might consider addressing or changing.

However, I have to confess that I found the process very time consuming and more than a little dispiriting this year. Time consuming because I spent more time than I ought (and have) in "verifying" entries in this year's annual reports, mostly by comparing them with last year's, and sometimes by resort to online bibliographies and publishers' sites on the web. This was also dispiriting, because I found a disconcerting degree of let-me-call-it inaccuracy in the statements submitted as annual reports of achievement.

You will recall that a couple of memos early in the process (and the Word template that Lorna circulated) were explicit in reminding everyone that the exercise related to work completed during the review period (1 April to 31 March). The exception to this is in the teaching evaluations which we have long had to treat on a "slip year" basis (previous Spring and current Fall rather than the Fall and Spring of the review period because the timing makes it impossible to process spring teaching data soon enough to include in the April process). You will also recall, I hope that I asked that so far as research was concerned, entries in the Publications section of the Review documents be limited to work actually appearing in print during this period.

Among other things I found that several reports continue to list "forthcoming" items as Publications in the review period, with varying levels of acknowledgment that these items are not yet "out". Some reports were explicit in stating a particular item was "in press" or "forthcoming," others simply listed the item without remark. Why does this matter? In my estimation, feedback from colleagues identifying those among us whom they consider worthy of consideration for merit are often influenced by the number of entries in the Publications section of the report, whether these items are published or in process. This, I think you can see, easily leads to unfairness, produced by double counting (or triple counting) of the same work year upon year as it moves from "submitted" to "under revision" to "accepted" to "in print" to "published". Those who play by the rules and "declare" only those items published during the year stand to be disadvantaged by this sort of behavior on the part of others unless there is careful scrutiny. Even if this scrutiny is exercised by the Head, and shapes his/her recommendations, the Dean's office allocates additional merit awards and may be misled by the sort of stacking behaviour I am asking all of us to avoid.

Further, the Annual Reports reveal some significant instances of misrepresentation (or a certain sloppiness, about which I feel no better). In the last two years there have been a number of items that appear in both 2005-06 and 2006-07 reports as published during the current period. Items appearing outside of the review period are often difficult to identify without close comparison of reports (if they bear a 2006 imprint and appear in issue 2 of a journal, say, they

might be out by mid March in one year, and then be claimed, even with pretty full citation information, as the product of the next review period). By the same token, some items are evidently claimed "in advance" -- in the last two years articles and books that are/were technically forthcoming on 31 March have been listed without qualification as published in the review period.

In addition, I have documented instances in which items listed as work published in the review period have never appeared as indicated, although they do appear under more or less amended titles in a subsequent report.

For reasons such as these it seems especially important, to me, that we limit our assessments to work actually published each year.

I know that some will attribute lapses to the cumbersome MYCV template (which we no longer have to use), and I am prepared to acknowledge the difficulties here, but it remains the case that even with MYCV there were different levels of assiduousness in the precise specification of information

I am dispirited by all of this because it seems to me to reflect either a degree of casualness about the process in which we are involved, or a form of behaviour encouraged by the intense competition for merit and advancement (or maybe both) that left unchecked will undermine the value and defendability of our process as well as the respect that we should display for one another .

In making my merit recommendations I have endeavoured, as ever, to ensure fairness, and the evaluation of teaching and service contributions as well as of research productivity actually attributable as "product" (ie in the case of publications, "in print") to the year under consideration.

By adhering, on a continuing basis, to the strict construction of "publication" that I asked colleagues to utilize this year, I trust that the annual round of performance reviews and merit recommendations will be placed on more secure and equitable foundations than those that I found myself, in some sense, "shoring up" this year.

Might I recommend that we each keep a copy of the reporting template circulated twice by Lorna (and attached herewith, with a couple of small typos fixed and an additional reminder about limiting the report to activities in the review period) as a separate folder on our computers and that we develop the habit of entering "activities" and publications therein as they occur/appear. It should then be a relatively simple matter to clean up the presentation of the material and write a paragraph or so characterizing work undertaken/ in progress in the year of record come March 2008. The following year, this should also be available as an accessible record of what was submitted previously)

With thanks for persisting with this long and somewhat admonitory message.

Graeme



[ANNUAL REPORT templa... \(52.0 KB\)](#)