The ABCs of Academic Scholarship

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Scholarship may be defined as the methods, discipline, and attainments of a scholar or scholars. Scholar in turn may be defined a (learned) person who has done advanced study in a special field.

Academy, originally the name of the garden in which Plato taught, has come to mean a place for special training or education, or a society of learned persons organized to advance art, science, or literature. An academy can similarly be devoted to any enterprise in medicine: research, education, clinical practice or administrative leadership or any mix thereof.

Consequently, the full meaning of the term academic scholarship should be the commitment to the advancement of a particular field of endeavour, by collaborating and working with others who share similar methods, disciplines, and goals.

Since Flexner, and more rapidly since the 1950s with the introduction of entities like the National Institutes of Health, the meaning of academic scholarship had become more implicit and more frequently linked with a narrower range of exemplars, usually from the fields of medical research or "discovery scholarship".

In 1990, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published Ernest Boyer's "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate." Boyer challenged prevailing notions such as "scholarship is a synonym for research" or "education is a synonym for teaching" or that "everyone teaches," by providing an explicit description of the various domains of scholarship. These four include:

- Scholarship of teaching
- Scholarship of Integration
- Scholarship of Application
- Scholarship of Discovery

Since its publication, Boyer's work has spurred "reconsideration" of the nature and manifestation of scholarship in academics' roles and expectations, as well as the criteria associated with recognition and academic promotion. A commonly used set of criteria is that of Glassick et al : From *Scholarship Assessed* 1997, pp. 25-36).

- **Clear goals**
- **Adequate preparation**
- **Methodology appropriate to goals**
- **Significant results or outcomes**
- **Effective presentation or platform/dissemination**
- **Reflective critique or peer review**

Members of the AAMC's Group on Educational Affairs (GEA) defined common formats in presenting educational contributions for academic promotion. (2006), and the Canadian Association for Medical

Education's Advancement of Educational Scholarship Working Group has just released a position paper on the educational scholarship of health professions education in Canada that sets out similar examples of approach to support and assessment of scholarly activity in health professions education. The AAMC's Group on Educational Affairs (GEA) five educator activity categories are:

1. Teaching: Any activity that fosters learning, including direct teaching and creation of associated instructional materials.
2. Learner Assessment: All activities associated with measuring learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to one or more of the following activities; development, implementation, analysis, or synthesis and presentation.
3. Curriculum Development: A longitudinal set that is more than one teaching session or presentation of designed educational activities that includes evaluation, which may occur at any training level.
4. Mentoring and Advising: Mentoring: a sustained, committed relationship from which both parties obtain reciprocal benefits. Advising: a more limited relationship than mentoring that usually occurs over a limited period, with the advisor serving as a guide.
5. Educational Leadership and Administration: Achieving results through others, transforming organizations through vigorous pursuit of excellence with their work's value demonstrated through ongoing evaluation, dissemination of results, and maximization of resources.

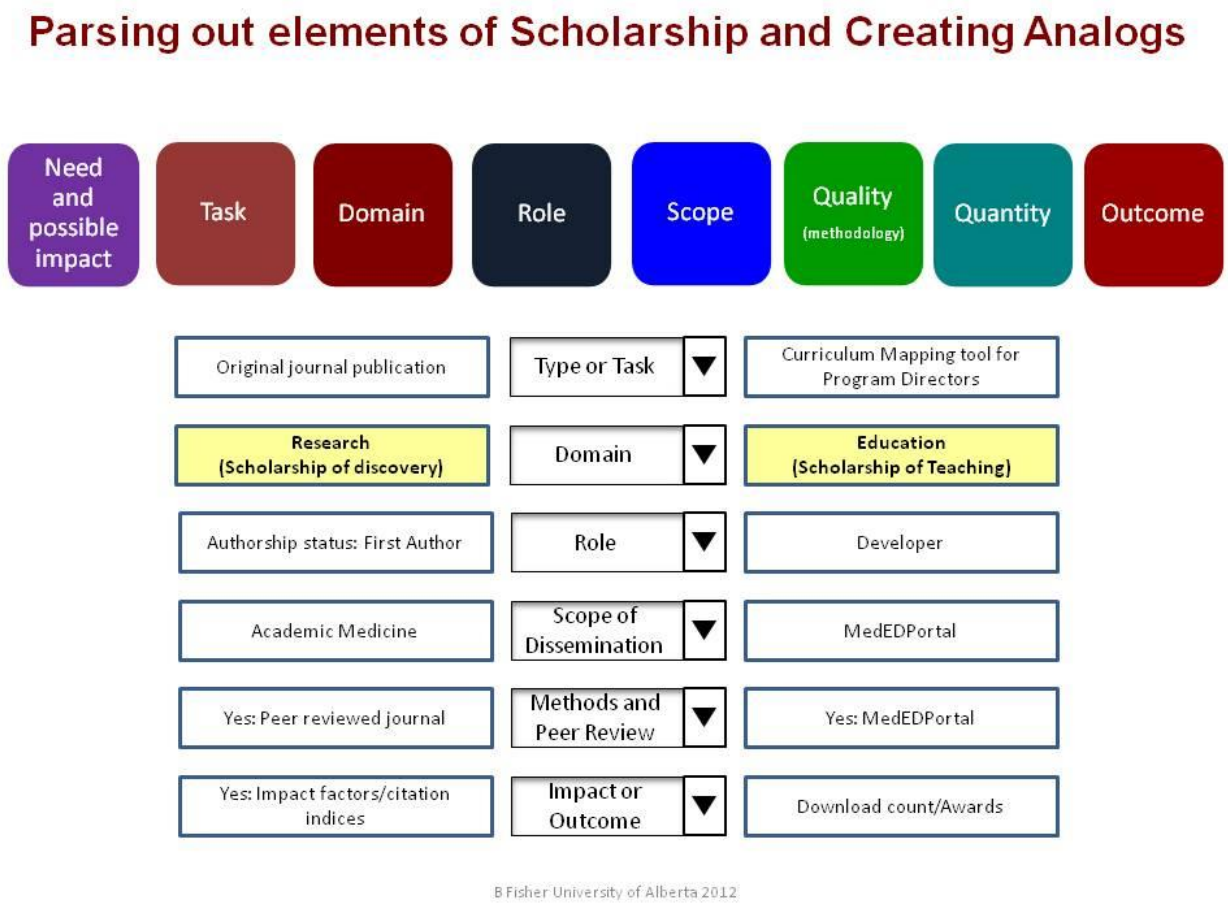
They also described appropriate forms of evidence and presentations or "core elements" for each educator activity category. This description consists of two overriding principles that cross all five categories of activity and contribution. Although directed towards scholarship in education, the rubric underlying this description is equally appropriate and useful for any form of scholarship:

- Excellence: Evidence of education excellence must document both the quantity (how much, how often, with whom) and quality of educational activities.
- Engagement with the education community: Effective presentation demonstrates that the activity drew from and/or contributed to the education community and its body of knowledge. The "contribution to the community" is in turn composed of scope of dissemination and uptake and the role of the individual in the contribution.

Excellence should include both quantity and quality for each activity category even though the specific types and forms of evidence may vary. Documentation of engagement should include evidence of a scholarly approach and/or scholarship. In short, this model is known as **"Q2Engage"**: Quality, Quantity, and Engagement with the academic community.

The roles and breadth and scope of engagement with the academic community (e.g., local, regional, national, or international) related to activity categories may vary by personal preferences and skill sets, or faculty rank and institution. In composite, the components may be described as the "3 Ps of scholarship"; that is product, peer review, and public dissemination.

The Annual Report used by the Faculties of Medicine & Dentistry at both Universities of Alberta and Calgary has incorporated these principles in its reporting process. For each record of an activity or productivity, the recorder is asked to provide the information that allows the "construction" of a scholarly description of the contribution, using standard language and format. The ensuing clarity and standardization is useful for both self and peer assessment of the contributions. An added benefit is that the process produces analogues of scholarship in all the domains of clinical, educational, discovery and administrative contribution (see figure 1) This allows for increased insight and understanding into different but equally important manifestations and component parts of scholarship in the various domains, and leads to more objective, comprehensive and equitable assessment, support and mentorship of the whole range of scholarly endeavor.



These principles are simple. However, their integration and application into the assessment, feedback, and means to best provide support and mentorship for scholarship can be difficult, laborious, and take time to master. Borrowing from approaches and grids adapted from the literature ( ) our faculty has produced the following set of tools that can be used for faculty members' self-assessment and for peer-assessment of the scholarship of their contributions- a "user's guide to the assessment of scholarship".

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