

How to Evaluate Faculty Research

ELMAR Contribution by J. Scott Armstrong

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Over the past year there have been issues raised on ELMAR about how to evaluate faculty, and I have weighed in on some of those discussions (e.g., on how to count papers [ELMAR contribution, February 7, 2002] and which journals should count [ELMAR contribution, July 5, 2002]. For a comprehensive and systematic approach, Gary Lilien and I proposed a checklist of factors some years ago. An updated version is provided on my website (<http://jscottarmstrong.com>) at "Current Projects: How to Evaluate Faculty."

Since ELMAR did not exist when Gary and I developed our checklist, it was difficult to get a discussion going on it. If the discussion proves interesting now, I plan to publish an account in the Ombudsman section of *Interfaces* (with published commentary from those having interesting contributions.)

Gary and I used this checklist to evaluate new hires. The process is challenging (though no more time consuming than current procedures that are often unstructured). Perhaps, as a result, laziness soon took over for both of us and we have not used it lately.

But my Marketing Department at Wharton does use some of this process. About ten years ago, our department developed what I believe to be a very good procedure for the annual evaluation of faculty. Each faculty member completes an annual review, which covers many areas. The key aspects of the procedures are:

1. It provides a set of areas and invites faculty to show how they contributed in each.
2. It solicits independent evaluations from each faculty member at the same level or above.

My favorite part of this process is a section that allows people to address the impact of their research. (We used to be more direct about this and invite faculty to describe their most important findings. In recent years, this invitation was made a bit more vague.)

The ratings are used as inputs when the Department Chair decides on annual raises. (Pay levels are not revealed, so this process refers only to percentage changes. Changes in levels are handled only by administrators.)

As an example of this process, I have put my most recent annual report on my website ("Annual Summary of Activities – 2001"). Incidentally, this will give you some idea as to the productivity of our department as my performance seemed to be in the "average" category (I say "seems" because no formal feedback is provided as to the peer ratings. I think my raise was about average, but that is only a guess.)

The annual review process is important not only for evaluation, but also for planning. In addition, it is nice to see all of the interesting things that have been done by one's colleagues.