

Qualified to Teach

by Mark D. Hanna and J. Lowell Mooney

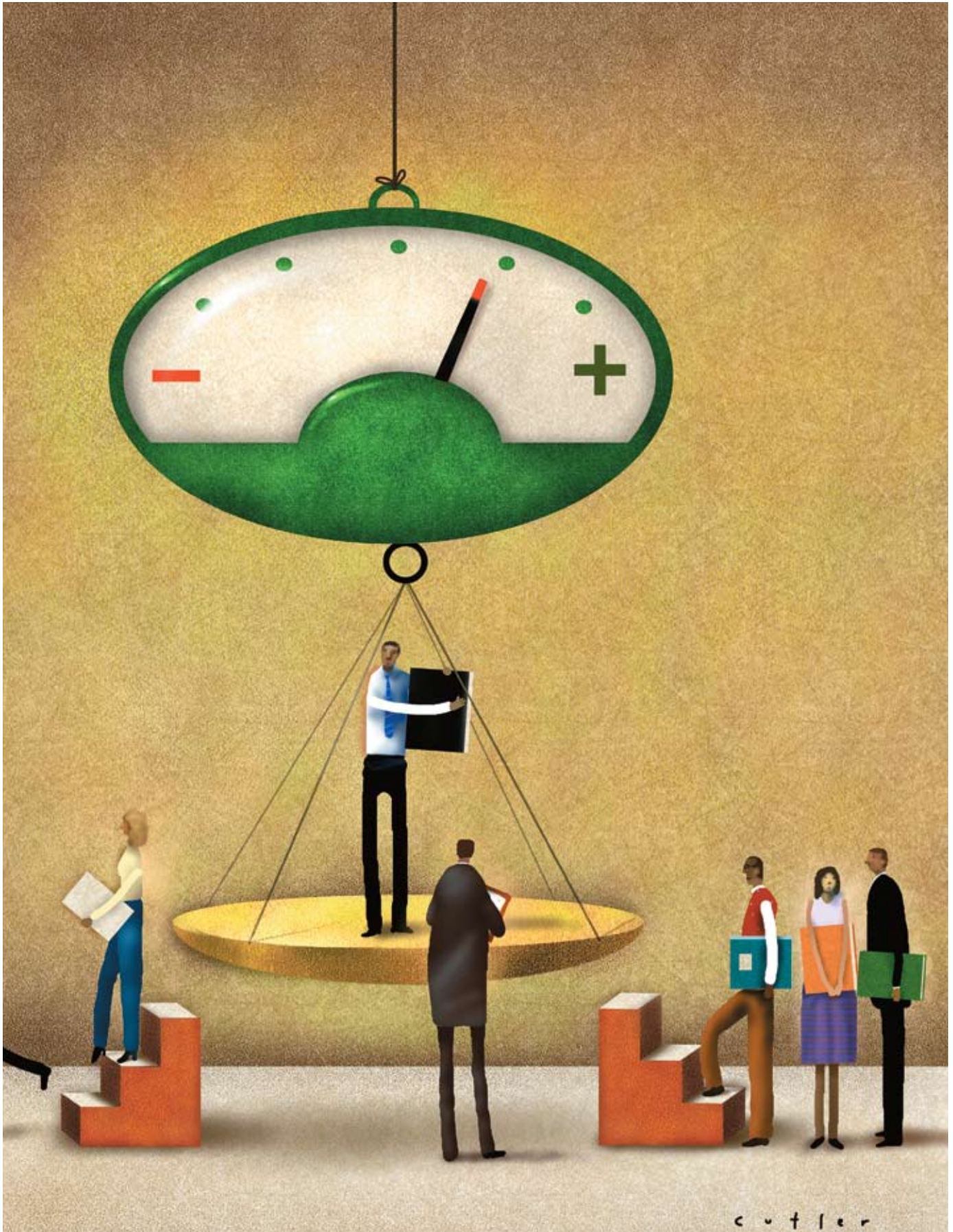
Is the best business school professor the one who publishes a specific number of articles every year in the top peer-reviewed journals? Or should other factors influence whether someone is considered qualified to teach business?

For any business school, choosing and evaluating faculty is a critical task, but there is no magic formula to help administrators achieve the perfect mix. Each accredited school follows a different mission and creates its own formula to hire faculty who suit its individual needs. But no matter how varied their missions are, accredited business schools all must meet AACSB International standards, which outline requirements for academically qualified (AQ) and professionally qualified (PQ) faculty. With these requirements as a guide, schools evaluate faculty as they're hired, to make sure they're right for the job—and a few years down the road, to make sure they've maintained their qualifications.

Often, research productivity is all that administrators consider when determining maintenance of AQ status for their faculty. That's a straightforward way to define faculty status, which otherwise can be a tricky job. If they focus on research output, faculty committees don't have to define policies in ways that could render colleagues "not qualified." By the same token, administrators have a clear definition of what constitutes qualified faculty; they don't have to make judgment calls, and they can't show biases for or against certain professors.

But while measuring research output can make it easier to weigh faculty contributions, we don't believe it's the best way for a school to assemble—and keep—the most talented faculty on staff.

To judge academic qualifications of faculty, business schools often resort to counting the number of articles they've published. But is there a better way?



“Some people argue that the emphasis on scholarly output encourages faculty to publish in less respectable outlets.”

Our Story

Our own school serves as a microcosm of the troubles that can result when an institution judges AQ status simply by faculty output. When our governance committee turned down the opportunity to develop operational definitions, the administration decided to define AQ faculty by focusing on research productivity, without considering research quality or disciplinary focus. The policy also failed to take into account the unique career opportunities some faculty have and the varying institutional needs that are sometimes reflected in their workloads. In short, the administration’s need for clarity and simplicity trumped the faculty’s need for flexibility.

Not surprisingly, this has led to a number of problems. For example, a faculty member’s AQ status helps determine teaching load and summer appointments, and some people believe the focus on research has had a negative impact on faculty attitudes toward service and teaching. Others argue that the emphasis on scholarly output encourages faculty to publish in less respectable outlets and not make the effort necessary to get work accepted in highly regarded journals.

So far, our school has strictly adhered to our AQ policy, but given these problems, our administration may revisit its effectiveness. In case that happens, we want to be able to benchmark our faculty accreditation standards against those of our sister schools. To that end, we have studied the definitions of AQ faculty supplied by more than 400 AACSB members in the association’s annual Business School Questionnaire (BSQ).

Because AACSB’s membership is so diverse, member schools have developed a wide range of definitions of qualified faculty in the five years since the current accreditation standards were released. Our goal was to identify the range of elements that characterize AQ strategies and determine similarities and differences that crop up based on each school’s mission. Since we are concerned that our own AQ policy is too heavily focused on research, we paid particular attention to how other schools are incorporating research into their faculty definitions.

Schools that want to revise their definitions of faculty qualifications may find our results helpful, while schools that want to focus on quality of intellectual contributions will benefit by knowing how schools with similar missions assess quality. For instance, do they designate target journals, use a journal ranking system, count the number of times an author’s work is cited, or consider the acceptance rates of a particular journal? In short, we wanted to answer two questions about AQ faculty: What is currently being measured, and what isn’t?

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS:

- RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)
- RU/H: Research Universities (high research activity)
- DRU: Doctoral/Research Universities
- Master’s L: Master’s Colleges and Universities (large programs)
- Master’s M: Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
- Master’s S: Master’s Colleges and Universities (small programs)
- Other U.S.: Other programs within the United States
- OUS: Programs outside the U.S.

By the Numbers

HOW DO SCHOOLS DETERMINE AQ STATUS?									
System Type	RU/VH	RU/H	DRU	Master’s L	Master’s M	Master’s S	Other U.S.	Outside U.S.	Summary
Counting	38%	55%	71%	70%	78%	50%	73%	47%	62%
Judgment	56%	24%	15%	18%	16%	42%	18%	33%	25%
Point	0%	15%	9%	10%	0%	8%	9%	4%	8%
Under development/ Other	6%	7%	6%	3%	6%	0%	0%	15%	5%
# of responses	48	62	34	125	37	12	34	45	397

The majority of schools rely on counting systems to determine AQ status, but different classifications of schools tend to take different approaches. For instance, heavily research-oriented institutions are more likely to use a judgment system, whereas master’s, doctoral, and less research-intensive schools rely more on counting systems.

Defining AQ

In order to group schools by mission and commonalities of practice, we used eight categories based on the Carnegie Foundation's Basic Classifications: research universities with very high research activity (RU/VH); research universities with high research activity (RU/H); doctoral/research universities (DRU); schools with large master's programs; schools with medium master's programs; schools with small master's programs; other U.S. schools, including baccalaureate and special focus classifications; and schools outside the U.S. (OUS).

We were able to use 397 responses from AACSB's 2007 BSQ. We found considerable diversity in the way schools define academically qualified faculty, both in the initial and the maintenance phases.

We looked first at initial qualification. According to AACSB's accreditation standards, initial qualification can be established through a terminal degree in the area of instruction; a combination of a terminal degree and research or graduate work; a specialized graduate degree; or specialized coursework in the teaching field.

For the majority of respondents across all classifications—84 percent—that initial qualification period lasts five years. Indeed, that number is so well-entrenched that a

2006 AACSB white paper allows faculty a five-year period of qualification based on conferral of the terminal degree. Some schools appear to have adopted an even stricter policy, however, since 12 percent of respondents say they re-examine AQ qualification after three years.

If initial qualification is based on attainment of "all but dissertation" (ABD) status in a PhD program, 74 percent of the schools apply maintenance requirements after three years, and 19 percent apply them after one year. The AACSB white paper allows ABD faculty three years of qualification, so most schools are easily complying with the recommendations.



Maintaining Qualification

Schools use a variety of methods to determine if faculty have maintained their academic qualifications beyond that initial phase. While some respondents didn't give details or haven't yet defined their method of determining AQ status, most rely on one of three systems:

Under the *counting system*, administrators make sure that faculty have published a minimum number of peer-reviewed articles or that they have made other intellectual contributions over a specified period of time.

Under the *judgment system*, the administrator responsible

HOW MANY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES ARE REQUIRED DURING THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

Minimum PRJ	RU/VH	RU/H	DRU	Master's L	Master's M	Master's S	Other U.S.	Outside U.S.	Summary
Varies	19%	15%	9%	6%	18%	11%	8%	8%	10%
3	10%	2%	3%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%
2	10%	27%	26%	30%	21%	33%	25%	32%	27%
1	29%	38%	46%	47%	49%	33%	47%	44%	44%
0	33%	17%	17%	14%	10%	22%	19%	16%	16%
# of responses	21	52	35	130	39	9	36	25	347

It's most common for schools to require faculty to publish at least one article in a peer-reviewed journal every three years to maintain their academically qualified status—but heavily research-oriented schools sometimes do not even insist on that minimum requirement. This difference might be because RU/VH schools look more at quality of output than quantity.

for evaluating faculty performance determines if faculty have maintained AQ status.

Under the *point system*, faculty earn points for various activities, and they must meet a minimum point total to maintain AQ status.

Certain types of schools seem to prefer one method over another. For instance, judgment-based systems are in the majority among schools with a very strong emphasis on research. They're also more prevalent among smaller master's degree institutions and OUS schools.

Going strictly by numbers, however, the method that's most prevalent among business schools is the counting system. The schools that are more likely to choose this system are research institutions that don't have quite as high an emphasis on research, doctoral institutions, and large and medium master's-granting schools. These schools tend to set a minimum level of faculty productivity. They can be fairly specific about how many articles must appear in peer-reviewed journals and how many pieces can be the products of other intellectual contributions.

On the other hand, what schools consider an acceptable minimum output varies widely. The biggest percent-

age of schools require faculty to publish at least one peer-reviewed journal article during the evaluation period to retain AQ status.

It's intriguing to note that a third of the RU/VH schools

do not require faculty to produce even one peer-reviewed article a year, whereas 19 percent of the schools in this category indicate that their requirements vary. It appears that, in these environments, the *quality and impact* of a faculty member's scholarly activity can carry a great deal of weight—more, perhaps, than *quantity* of output. That is, if faculty publish infrequently, but their articles appear in the top journals and discuss important research, the administration is satisfied with their scholarly output.

A similar pattern emerges in regard to other intellectual contributions. Schools with a heavy research orientation set the bar lower than other schools in terms of how much

scholarly output they expect faculty to produce to maintain their AQ status. By contrast, schools in the master's and DRU categories set the bar closer to the expected level of productivity—roughly one to three peer-reviewed articles published during a five-year evaluation period. It seems



HOW MANY TOTAL INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE REQUIRED?

Combined scholarly contributions	RU/VH	RU/H	DRU	Master's L	Master's M	Master's S	Other U.S.	Outside U.S.	Summary
Varies	21%	16%	5%	6%	14%	20%	8%	7%	10%
>5	4%	12%	10%	15%	9%	20%	8%	15%	12%
4	0%	7%	5%	7%	2%	0%	3%	0%	5%
3	21%	33%	15%	27%	14%	60%	17%	7%	22%
2	17%	16%	33%	23%	30%	0%	28%	33%	25%
1	38%	16%	31%	21%	30%	0%	36%	33%	26%
0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%
# of responses	24	43	39	112	43	5	36	27	329

For schools with counting systems, requirements to maintain AQ status vary greatly. Combined scholarly contributions—both peer-reviewed journal articles and other intellectual contributions—seldom total more than three during the school's evaluation period.

“Many business educators are expressing concern about the kind of scholarly research that’s being done—and being rewarded.”

those schools might be using the AQ policy to push faculty research productivity higher.

Many schools do consider a number of factors besides scholarly output when evaluating their AQ faculty. These include teaching level, teaching load, academic discipline, match between academic preparation and teaching area, and administrative and service assignments. Many also weigh faculty rank, career path, or judged quality of the intellectual contribution.

It’s worth noting that a significant number of U.S. institutions across all classifications focus on teaching load, whereas only 17 percent of OUS schools consider that an important factor. In the U.S., only RU/VH schools established discipline-specific standards for AQ status. And only research universities and schools with large master’s programs considered service assignments when evaluating AQ status.

Generally Speaking

From our research, we were able to draw some broad conclusions about the way certain types of schools judge the AQ status of their faculty.

- Schools with a very high research focus provide many different avenues for faculty to maintain academic qualification. They’re more likely to use the judgment system of evaluating contributions, and they usually have differing expectations based on service assignments, career tracks, rank, and discipline. Interestingly, compared to less research-intensive schools, they often require *less* productivity in terms of num-

ber of journal articles published. This disparity suggests that they are paying greater attention to factors such as the quality of the publications and the type of external service the faculty member performs. Another possibility is that, instead of relying on “industry standards” or generalized expectations of scholarly output for faculty, these institutions use their existing cultures and their individual faculty evaluation processes to establish their expectations of productivity.

- U.S. schools that do not focus as heavily on research most often follow a rigid counting system that relies on peer-reviewed journals and other intellectual contributions. Their AQ definitions appear to be based almost solely on how many journal articles are published within a five-year span; they pay little attention to factors such as service assignments, administrative roles, and publication quality. Thus, it’s likely that, at these schools, the AQ policies essentially set the minimum levels of faculty productivity, and other evaluation processes are forced to conform to the AQ policies. It’s reasonable to expect that, as the policies are implemented and as they begin to have a motivational effect on faculty, schools will begin measuring quality as well as quantity. As a result, we believe, schools that rely on counting systems eventually will be more flexible, and more of them will add point-based or judgment-based systems.

- Among non-U.S. schools, which we categorized in one group, there was so much diversity that we were not able to create a generalized statement regarding the way they determine AQ status.

WHAT OTHER FACTORS AFFECT AQ STATUS?									
Factors	RU/VH	RU/H	DRU	Master’s L	Master’s M	Master’s S	Other U.S.	Outside U.S.	Summary
Teaching level	44%	43%	100%	46%	88%	100%	75%	17%	53%
Teaching load	0%	14%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Discipline	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	5%
Degree match with teaching area	0%	14%	0%	8%	13%	0%	0%	17%	9%
Administrative service assignment	11%	7%	0%	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
Other	22%	21%	0%	15%	0%	0%	25%	50%	19%
# responses	9	14	3	13	8	1	4	6	58


Teaching level is the other variable that most schools consider when they look at factors other than research to determine the AQ status of faculty. However, teaching level seems to be less important to schools outside the U.S.

Because AQ policies vary so much by Carnegie classification, we believe schools have different motivations for the way they develop their policies. For instance, nonresearch institutions might want to bolster research productivity; RU/VH schools might want to provide latitude for a wide range of research methods. More inquiry would be needed to determine how much AQ requirements are influencing administrative policy and what kind of impact these policies are having on faculty productivity in areas such as teaching, service, and scholarship.

The Future of Research

Many business educators are expressing concern about the kind of scholarly research that's being done—and being rewarded. For instance, a recent report from AACSB's Impact of Research Task Force noted that most schools tend to focus on the type of basic research that appears in peer-reviewed journals, instead of encouraging research that supports practice, learning, and pedagogy. The task force took the position that many existing AQ policies do not do a good job of evaluating quality, impact, and relevance to teaching discipline when considering faculty research—and we have to agree.

Even though administrators may prefer to evaluate faculty qualifications through simple systems that allow them merely to count the number of articles that have been published, these systems are flawed. They do not take into account a professor's quality of work, teaching load, service assignments, or career track. In fact, simplistic counting systems might lead business schools to encourage *less* engagement between their faculty and their community. After all, if faculty must focus so much on how many articles they publish, they may not spend their time in other paths of professional development, such as volunteering for service opportunities or activities designed to improve their teaching.

By contrast, more subjective evaluation systems—those that do not rely solely on measuring research output—encourage faculty to include other activities in their schedules. We believe that when faculty have incentives to improve their teaching, increase their service to the school, and make contributions to practice, they will become more productive, more well-rounded, and more valuable members of the management education community. 

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