Public Engagement Research Option (PERO)

# Memorandum of Understanding (TEMPLATE)

## Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish that:

1. **Professor A,** referred to as the “candidate” from this point, has selected the Public Engagement Research Option (PERO) in the promotion and tenure process;
2. the candidate’s Executive Officer (EO) and Dean’s office are aware of this decision; and
3. all parties understand and will follow the PERO guidelines.

If after signing this MOU, the candidate decides to opt out of PERO, that should be documented in an addendum to this MOU before the deadline for the candidate to submit their list of external evaluators. The MOU and all addendums must be included in the candidate’s dossier (see attachments to [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113)).

## Background

The paramount consideration in the evaluation of publicly engaged research is the degree to which it has societal impact. However, gauging such impact can be a challenge in the promotion and tenure process. Publicly engaged research may generate scholarly and/or creative products (e.g., policy reports, museum exhibits, and/or websites) whose impact may not be adequately or accurately captured by traditional evaluation metrics. PERO addresses this issue by permitting the addition of alternative metrics that permit the evaluation of societal impact.

As highlighted in [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) (see section II.A.1), publicly engaged research draws on a faculty member’s expertise to define and address societal problems, concerns, issues, or interests to contribute to the public good. Such research occurs in collaboration with communities or organizations at the local, state, national, or international level.

## General Terms

### PERO is for publicly engaged research

PERO is designed to support the evaluation of publicly engaged research. Thus, PERO is only for faculty whose research program is largely publicly engaged and the discipline’s traditional review mechanisms are insufficient to evaluate the impact of the research. Beyond these considerations, PERO is likely an appropriate option for faculty answering in the affirmative to the majority of questions provided in the *PERO Guide* (see attachments to [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113)).

### Timing of the PERO decision

The decision to select PERO must be made at least two calendar years prior to the candidate’s submission of their materials for promotion. PERO is nonbinding for the candidate until the deadline for the submission of their list of external reviewers. Thus, the candidate may later decide in collaboration with their EO not to take PERO, but this must be prior to the deadline for the candidate’s submission of their list of external evaluators to their committee.

### PERO’s external letter options

For faculty opting into PERO, two of the five required letters from external evaluators must be from experts **outside**academia who can objectively evaluate the societal impact of the candidate’s publicly engaged research (see section II.C.10 of [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) and the *PERO Guide* in the attachments to [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113)); the remaining three letters must be from external evaluators at academic institutions. The candidate should collaborate with their EO and/or their designee in making the decision as to what types of experts outside academia have the relevant knowledge to evaluate the societal impact of their research. It may also be useful to consult with others with more expertise, including leadership at the school, college, or university level.

External evaluators outside academia can include, but are not limited to, someone in another community who holds a parallel position to a community partner, a leading public figure, and an expert in industry or government. Regardless of the letter writer’s position, letters from external evaluators outside academia must be appropriate in that they are from individuals who are (1) **highly qualified**in terms of their expertise and/or experience and (2) **objective**in that they do not directly benefit from the candidate’s promotion and tenure (see section II.C.10 of [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) and the *PERO Guide* in the attachments to [**Provost Communication 9**](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113)).

In submitting their list of external evaluators, the candidate should include not only evaluators at academic institutions, but also evaluators outside academia, with enough names to guarantee some degree of privacy to each type of evaluator. As is the case for all candidates, the majority of the five letters from external evaluators, regardless of whether they are from within or outside academia, must come from the unit’s list.

In sum, for PERO candidates, there must be at least three external evaluators at academic institutions along with the two from outside academia. Whether evaluators in these two categories come from the candidate’s or unit’s list, is up to the unit.

In the following table, provide the types of evaluators outside academia appropriate to evaluate the societal impact of the candidate’s research. Do not provide names, but rather the type of positions experts would hold (e.g., legislator with documented interest in the area and/or director of relevant organizations). **NOTE:** In the sample case, the type of evaluators and rationale for selecting each evaluator are detailed in the table on the following page.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Evaluator | Rationale for Type of Evaluator |
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|  |  |
|  |  |

### Alternative metrics

Candidates selecting PERO are expected to generate scholarly and/or creative products (e.g., peer reviewed journals, books, and/or grants) considered traditional in their discipline. However, they will also generate products whose impact may not adequately be captured by traditional metrics. Thus, it may be necessary to use novel products and metrics. **NOTE:** In the sample case, the products and metrics are detailed in the table on the following page.

Given that the metrics for evaluating publicly engaged research are likely to evolve over time, addendums may be added to this MOU to reflect modifications to the metrics up to a year before the candidate’s submission of their materials for promotion. However, any amendment to the MOU should include a compelling rationale for the changes. The initial MOU and all amendments will be included in the candidate’s dossier.

| Product (I.E., A Document or Entity Created as the Result of the Candidate’s Research) | Metric (I.E., A Way to Measure the Societal Impact of the Product) | Rationale for the Product & Metric | Evidence of Meeting the Metric | Rationale and Goal Statement |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
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### PERO advisory committee feedback

A draft version of the MOU must be shared with the PERO Advisory Committee along with a 1-page overview of the candidate’s research. The feedback report from the PERO Advisory Committee should be attached to the final version of the MOU. The candidate will also need to provide a detailed response describing how the feedback from the PERO Advisory Committee was incorporated into the final MOU and/or why some feedback was not incorporated, using the space provided below or on a separate document attached to the final MOU. If feedback from the PERO Advisory Committee is not incorporated in the final MOU, a strong, detailed, and compelling justification is required.

## Acknowledgement of Agreement

By signing this MOU, the candidate, the EO, and the Dean’s office acknowledge that the candidate has selected PERO; all three parties understand and will follow the guidelines for PERO as outlined here (see also [Provost Communication 9](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) and the PERO Guidein the attachments to [Provost Communication 9](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113)). It is the EO’s responsibility to share that the candidate is taking PERO with the promotion and tenure committees at every level and ensure the unit committee follows the guidelines outlined in [Provost Communication 9](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) and the PERO Guidein the attachments to [Provost Communication 9](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9d7miwmgcvyk4v4xpjgfgdua83jauhhs/file/936591220113) in regard to letter writers and alternative evaluation metrics. All parties should retain a copy of the signed MOU.

Signatures on this MOU document indicate that each party agrees that the listed products and metrics of success are appropriate. Signatures on this MOU, however, do not indicate an endorsement for promotion and tenure.

**Faculty Candidate’s Name and Signature**

Date:

**Unit Executive Officer’s Name and Signature**

Date:

**Dean’s Name and Signature**

Date:

Disclaimer: This is not an actual MOU that was used for PERO. This sample MOU was developed for illustrative purposes. Updated: 9/22/2023