

What is a Scholar?

The following attributes distinguish strong and promising scholars from ordinary academics:

1. **Definition** – a strong scholar has a sharp focus that delimits the area of inquiry in which s/he works. A young academic who works on more than one research focus is likely to fail in developing a complex, depth and sophisticated understanding of any of the topics under investigation. Work on one thing, and do that well. In the post-PhD period, this development of a long-term research identity is crucially dependent on sharp definition.
2. **Disposition** – a strong scholar is marked by what could be called academic poise; a scepticism about knowledge claims, self-criticism and doubt. Such a person is naturally inquisitive about the world in and around the focus of his/her specialization.
3. **Immersion** – a strong scholar ‘swims’ in the literature around her topic, is intimately familiar with and knowledgeable about both the classical and most recent literatures in the area of inquiry; such a scholar is also conscious of how her research both builds on *and departs from* established wisdom on the topic of interest.
4. **Authority** – a strong scholar is articulate about her area of inquiry and can speak with authority and clarity about what it is she researches, why and with what hypotheses. Such clarity is only possible of immersion is a reality in the life of a scholar.
5. **Persistence** – a strong scholar shows a dogged determination to ‘get to the bottom of things’, a resoluteness in seeking deep explanations for events, a persistence despite repeated cul-de-sacs in the course of investigation.
6. **Passion** – a strong scholar is passionate, and seen to be passionate, about what s/he studies. The topic or focus of investigation excites and enthuses the young academic, and explains the persistence in pursuing the complex problem or concern.

7. **Connection** – a strong scholar is well-networked with and among the leading international scholars in his field of interest; such a person is also highly mobile i.e., beyond electronic networking, also visible and seen to contribute in the 3-4 most important global research conferences in the area of focus.
8. **Recognition** – a strong scholar is easily recognized among her peers as a bright, up-and-coming researcher, and increasingly called on to participate in various research and writing activities (e.g., chapter in book) as a result of the promising quality of her work.
9. **Productivity** – a strong scholar is highly productive through published and presented research, in the right forums. This means a high degree of selectivity is applied in making decisions as to where to appear and with what kinds of research reports.
10. **Competitiveness** – a strong scholar constantly seeks opportunities in which to compete for the best research grants, the prominent scholarly awards and all other kinds of competitive events that both recognize and support outstanding work. Timidity or a false sense of humility hold little value; constructive competition is not only a valuable learning event, it also sheds light on achievement.