

Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes
Assessment of Research and Professional Activity, 2008-2018

This past academic year the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů) initiated a Research Assessment of its scholarly production during the first decade of its operations, from 2008 to 2018. To meet that goal, the Institute appointed a committee of internationally recognized academics to organize the evaluation of the published work of USTR scholars. The committee consisted of: Dr. Sirkka Ahonen (University of Helsinki), Dr. Christiane Brenner (Collegium Carolinum, Munich), Dr. Benjamin Frommer (Northwestern University, USA), Dr. Jens Gieseke (Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam), and Dr. Piotr Maciej Majewski (University of Warsaw).

The committee was tasked with finding appropriate reviewers for 127 publications by USTR scholars. The committee first met on 25 October 2018, when the members determined the parameters of the assessment process and created a list of potential reviewers who had demonstrated expertise in the field or subfield, the ability to read in Czech, and who were not professionally resident in the Czech Republic. Individual committee members took responsibility for one-fifth of the USTR publications and endeavored to assign those to appropriate reviewers, respond to the outside expert's queries, and follow up to make sure they submitted the results. Reviewers who had a conflict of interest were removed from the relevant evaluation. At the second meeting of the committee, on 15 February 2019, the committee reviewed the preliminary results. During the period from October 2018 to April 2019, committee members assigned individual publications to 93 scholars from countries around the world.

Once the evaluations and scores were received from the outside referees, each committee member was tasked with reviewing the evaluations and assessing the validity of the scores. In cases where two outside referees gave different scores, committee members determined the final score based on the evaluations and their own assessment of the publication. In certain cases, the committee chair assessed and confirmed the final scores.

The committee has now completed its review of the evaluations provided by the independent, outside scholars. Of the 127 publications that were assessed:

- 17 received the highest final rating of 1 (Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigor)
- 32 received a final rating of 2 (Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigor but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence)
- 53 received a final rating of 3 (Quality that is recognized internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigor)
- 25 received a final rating of 4 (Quality that is recognized nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigor)
- 1 received a 5 (Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognized work)

Overall, the average rating for the publications of the Institute was 2.70. The average scores for the individual sections of the USTR were:

Research Section 1938-1945	2.74
Research Section 1945-1989, I.	2.91
Research Section 1945-1989, II.	2.57
Education Section	2.44

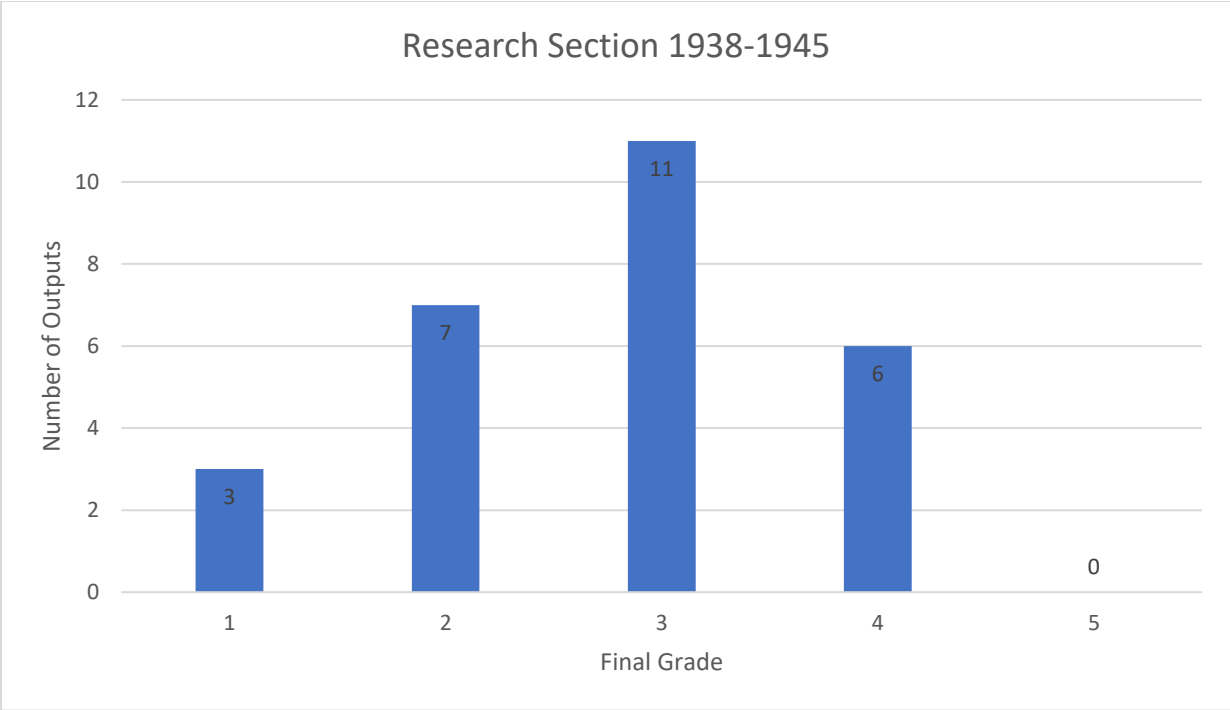
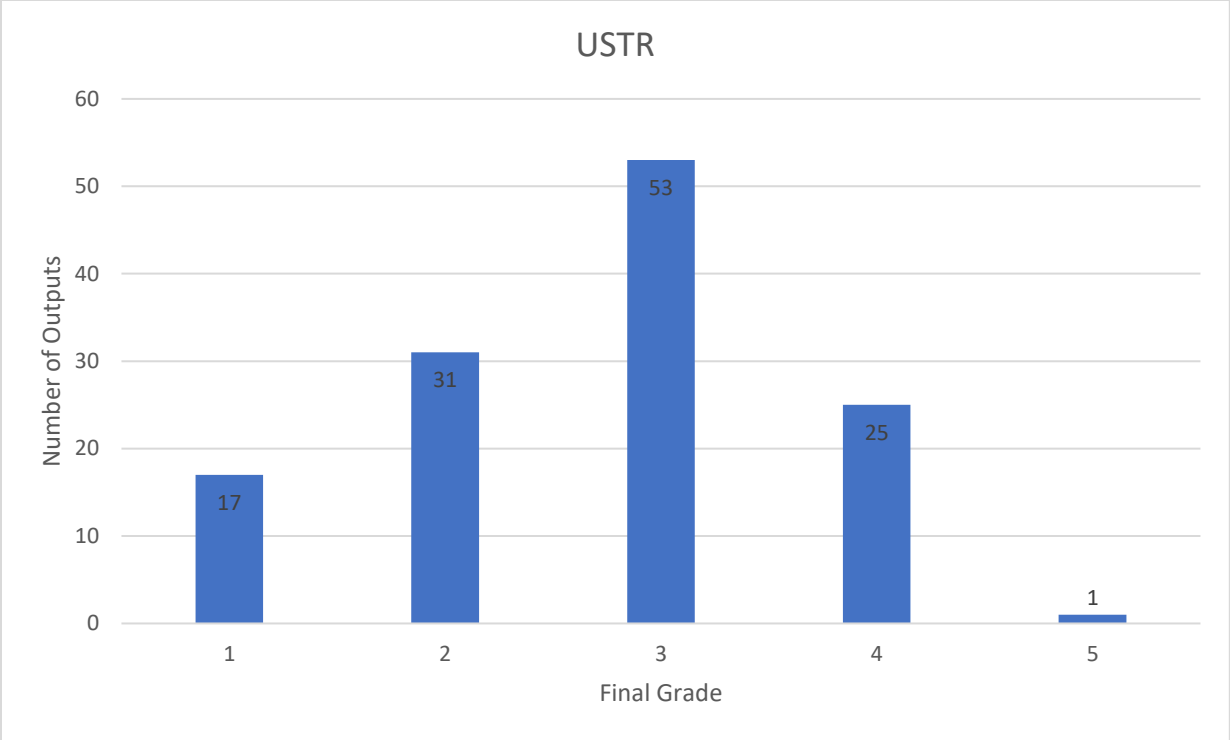
The four sections of the Institute all achieved a score in the 2-3 range, but there was a statistically significant difference between them. Individually, the USTR Education Section had the highest overall average score, followed by the Research Section 1945-1989, II., then the Research Section 1938-1945, and, lastly, the Research Section 1945-1989, I. The Education Section also had the highest number of outputs (6) with the best score, despite having the smallest number of total outputs.

The results of the study also indicate that the Institute has placed a greater emphasis on the period from 1945-1989 than on the period of the Second World War. The two sections that covered the communist period had 73 publications between them, whereas the one section that focuses on the war had 27. On average, however, the results were similar. If one combines the scores for the two sections that focus on 1945-1989, then the resulting average score (2.7) is very close to that of the Second World War section (2.74).

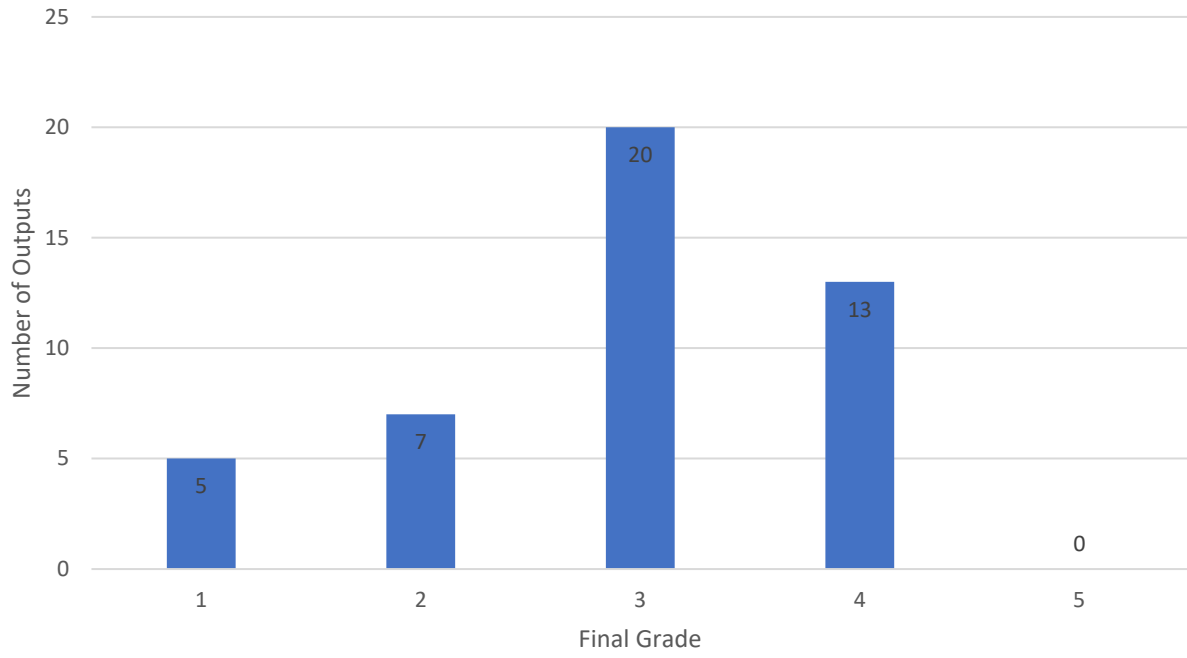
Committee members noted the high quality of many publications, but also remarked on certain areas for improvement. In particular, a large number of publications were based on Czech archival and secondary sources or foreign works published in translation, even in cases where the subject itself was international in nature. Along similar lines, reviewers noted a need for some of the Institute's scholars to contextualize their work within broader historical developments. A further area for consideration is the contrast between more traditional positivist (or factographic) approaches to the material and the argumentative theses more commonly advanced by scholars internationally, including the revision of established narratives. Nonetheless, the outside reviewers and committee did commend a number of outputs that utilized and advanced international scholarship.

Finally, the diverse format of the outputs under consideration made it sometimes difficult to assess them by the same measure. Reviewers were given a rubric that privileged "originality" as a key element necessary for a publication to achieve a high score, but a number of the outputs reproduced documents instead of advancing new arguments. Other outputs were of a popular character meant not necessarily to advance scholarly knowledge, but to inform the public, a mission that some reviewers welcomed, but not one that fits well into the evaluation rubric.

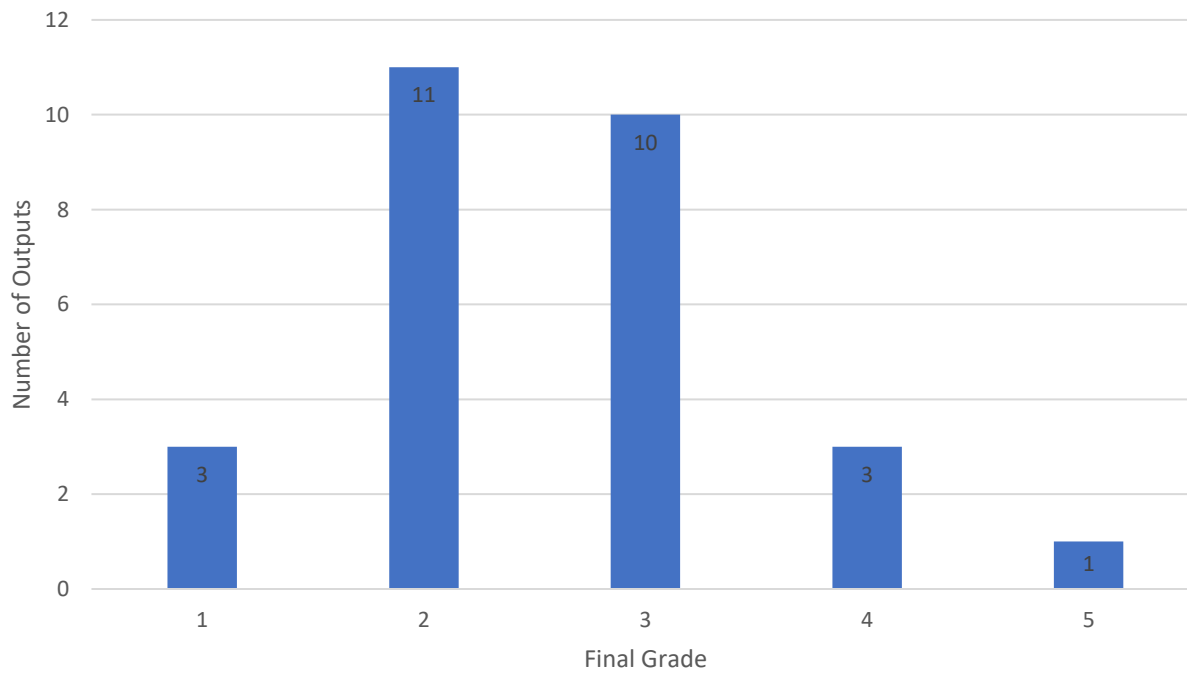
Overall, the results indicate that there is a great divergence in the significance and quality of the publications produced by scholars at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Most of the publications achieved a level of quality and significance that would be recognized internationally (1-3), while nearly all are at least at a level that would be nationally recognized.



Research Section 1945-1989 I.



Research Section 1945-1989 II.



Education Section

