**ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS**

**GUIDANCE FOR HEADS OF SCHOOL (December 2024)**

**Introduction**

This document outlines your role in the Academic Promotion procedure. Please also read the Promotion Policy and Procedure (Academic Staff) and other relevant supplementary guidance. If you have any queries, please contact the HR Adviser/Partner for your School.

The key aspects of your role are summarised in the diagram below. This guidance document provides further information in respect of each step.

It is acknowledged that in some Schools the day to day responsibility for line management, including conversations about promotion and associated activities, sit with Academic Line Managers or Directors of Institutes. Where this is the case, Heads of School should ensure that the Academic Line Managers/Directors of Institute are following the guidance.

**1. Career Development Discussions**

The consideration of career development for academic staff is a key aspect of your role. This is an integral part of day-to-day management and runs through the full range of staff management processes from recruitment, induction, probation, annual review through to promotion. It is acknowledged that for some Heads of School, part of line management responsibility has been delegated to academic line managers, including annual review.

Your role in respect of promotion is, therefore, a key part of your wider responsibility for the development of staff, either directly or indirectly through academic line managers. Providing advice and guidance on an individual’s career development, readiness for promotion, and how this might be enhanced, should typically form part of one-to-one discussions and will form part of the discussion during the annual review for academic staff. The Promotion Policy & Procedure (Academic Staff) highlights the expectation that staff who are applying for promotion will have completed an annual review during the 12 month period leading up to their application being submitted. Applications for promotion should not, therefore, come as a surprise, but rather should be a natural step in a planned, supported and managed career development process.

A project to review annual review, including making sure this process is more closely aligned with academic promotion, is underway. Meanwhile, the annual review form has been updated to make reference the Framework of Criteria as part of thinking about development requirements as well as objective setting.

**2. Providing guidance to applicants and encouraging applications**

You should provide guidance to members of staff who are considering the submission of an application. This includes being realistic with those who may not be ready for promotion and providing guidance to them on what steps they can take to strengthen their application and likelihood of success. This should include referring to the Framework of Criteria, the mandatory evidence requirements and supporting indicators included in the criteria for each Pillar to consider what advice you can given as well as support to strengthen a future application for promotion.

You should encourage appropriately qualified/experienced staff to apply for promotion, providing a clear rationale as to why they should (the decision to apply ultimately sits with the member of staff and they have sole responsibility for submitting their own application).

This includes staff from protected characteristics groups, such as staff from racialised groups, women as well as part time members of staff who, according to historic data, are less likely to apply for promotion.

**3. Receiving and collating applications**

At the launch of the annual academic promotions exercise, staff will be advised of the deadline to submit their application to you. As part of this, staff will be reminded that applications which do not meet the required format will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their application is made available to you early enough to allow sufficient time for your Head of School Evaluation statement to be completed and the application submitted prior to the closing date for consideration by the relevant University Promotion Committee.

As part of your responsibilities, with assistance from HR and School colleagues, you are required to manage the receipt and collation of all applications for your area and prepare them for onward submission.

* **Individual circumstances form**

As part of the application process, applicants have the choice of disclosing individual circumstances that they feel should be taken into consideration in respect of their application. Such circumstances may include, for example, career interruptions due to caring responsibilities, ill health or disability which means that applicants have had a period of absence that may have impacted on volume but not the quality of outputs. This may particularly have been the case during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Applicants may disclose information on their application form (in which case this will be seen by the University Promotion Committee) or, if they wish to disclose information on a confidential basis, may complete a separate Individual Circumstances form.

Where an Individual Circumstances form is received, this will also be shared with the HR Adviser/Partner for your School who will discuss it with you in advance of preparation of your Head of School Evaluation form. More information about this is provided in section 6.

There may be occasions where you are aware of individual circumstances that have impacted on the volume of activity but which the applicant is reluctant to disclose. In such circumstances you should encourage the applicant to disclose the information on their form or in the Individual Circumstances form, stressing the manner in which the latter will be dealt with as outlined in the Policy. Alternatively, you may wish to discuss with the applicant that you intend to allude to the circumstances in your Head of School Evaluation form, stressing that you will not specify the detail of the circumstances themselves.

**4. Preparing Head of School Evaluations and providing external evaluation nominations**

A crucial part of the process is the preparation of your Head of School Evaluation Form for each applicant. An important aspect of this evaluation is for you to provide detail about the disciplinary context/norms. The evaluation will be submitted to the University Promotion Committee along with the application form and is a key part in assisting the Committee to determine whether the criteria for promotion have been met.

Your Head of School evaluation will also form part of the feedback that applicants receive, along with the specific feedback from the University Promotion Committee.

Applications from staff whose activities fall across more than one School

Where the activities of an applicant sit across more than one School, the Heads of School for each area should agree with the applicant as to whether each will contribute to the preparation of the evaluation or whether one Head of School will take the lead, consulting with the other Head of School and other relevant staff as appropriate. The decision about this should be reached during the discussion about the decision to apply for promotion.

Head of School Evaluation Form

As part of completing your Evaluation Form, you are responsible for consulting with appropriate senior colleagues from within the School or other parts of the University to seek their views on the applicant’s suitability for promotion. You should ensure that you gather an appropriate range of views to inform your evaluation, and critically, ensure that as part of this you gather information about the disciplinary norms. It is anticipated that this will be a minimum of three senior colleagues, likely including the Academic Line Manager, Director of Research and/or Education and Head of Division. **You should ensure that the applicant is informed of the colleagues that you are intending to consult so that, for example, any potential conflicts of interest can be identified.**

The information included should ultimately provide a clear view on the applicant’s suitability for promotion, incorporating views from those you have consulted and making specific reference to the strength of the application against disciplinary norms. Further information about each section of the Evaluation Form is provided below.

| **Section of the form** | **Guidance** |
| --- | --- |
| Overview of the case | Please provide a contextual assessment of the application in light of the norms of the discipline. You should objectively draw attention to particular strengths of the application as well as any areas for development or reservations about the case.  These should not come as a surprise to the candidate and have already been discussed with them as part of any ongoing support. Provide analytical as well as purely factual input.  You should also include here any relevant subject-specific knowledge and context to assist the University Promotion Committee. |
| Consultation | Please detail the names/job titles of those you have consulted as part of preparing the Evaluation Form. |
| Overview of the applicant’s evidence | You should provide an appraisal of the evidence provided against each Pillar that the applicant has included in their application, again, drawing on the views of the others you have consulted. You should comment on the evidence provided in the context of your School and the discipline of the member of staff, again noting strengths or any reservations that you have based on your own view or those of senior colleagues you have consulted.  Please comment on the extent to which an applicant is leading work rather than supporting it.  The Framework of Criteria for Promotion stipulates the minimum thresholds required for each grade/career track therefore this should be referred to in considering the application. Where an applicant has not provided evidence under a Pillar that is required, the application should be rejected/referred back to the applicant as incomplete.  Where an applicant has not provided evidence against a Pillar that is not required as per the Framework of Criteria for Promotion, please simply state n/a.  For Citizenship, please comment on the evidence of contribution to Citizenship as appropriate to the career stage of the applicant. Further information about Citizenship can be found in the Framework of Criteria for Promotion.  Please note the suggested word limit for your evaluation in respect of each Pillar of 200 words. |
| Any other relevant information | This section can be used to provide other information that you feel is relevant not included in any other section of the Evaluation Form. This may include your assessment of personal circumstances that the applicant has disclosed in their application or, separately, in an Individual Circumstances form. Please do not disclose information about the detail of an Individual Circumstances form. Whether an applicant has disclosed the information in their application (which will be seen by the University Committee) or an Individual Circumstances form, please categorise your view on the likely impact as either (i) likely to have had little or no impact; (ii) likely to have had some impact or, (iii) likely to have had a substantial impact. |

**Providing Nominations for External Evaluators**

The process of seeking external evaluations has been a key contributor to delays in previous exercises and you are, therefore, being asked to provide names at an earlier stage in the process than last year.

Changes have been made to the requirements as follows:

* They are no longer required for applications to Senior Lecturer and Senior Research Fellow, other than where the Committee determines that a case is borderline and that one external evaluation will assist in reaching a decision.
* For Reader and Chair applications: reaching out to three (two national and one international where possible, otherwise a further strong UK based evaluator). In addition, where three cannot be obtained, reaching a decision on the basis of two and where two are supportive a third not being required.

Therefore, for Reader and Chair applications, you are asked to consider who could act as an external evaluator at the same stage as completing your evaluation, including consulting with senior academics, providing 4 names for the University Promotion Committee to endorse. Once endorsed you are asked to contact the proposed external evaluator to confirm there are no conflicts of interest and to confirm a reasonable timescale for the evaluation to be submitted.

For Senior Lecturer/Senior Research Fellow applications, where required, you will be asked to nominate evaluators (2) Following the University Promotion Committee meeting and, once endorsed by the Committee, reach out to the evaluator to confirm there are no conflicts of interest and a reasonable timescale for completion.

The external evaluators you nominate should be impartial/independent and should not include a PhD supervisor, close collaborators, friends or relatives. Nominating an inappropriate evaluator might delay the application process. In determining your selection of nominees you should consider:

* The number of external evaluators required (see above);
* Knowledge of the subject area/discipline.
* Appropriate seniority relevant to the level of promotion being sought, leaders and experts in their field - i.e., at the grade being applied for or higher.

The external evaluations received will then be considered by the University Promotion Committee members at the second meeting of the Committee.

**5. Attending the University Promotion Committee**

You will attend the University Promotion Committee to listen to the discussion about the cases for your School and to respond to any queries that committee members have. For example, queries may relate to discipline specific context.

For cases involving external evaluations you will attend the follow up meeting where these are considered by the committee, again to listen to the discussion and to respond to any queries.

You will only attend the Committee meetings when the cases for your School are being considered.

**9. Providing feedback – to both successful and unsuccessful applicants**

Once the outcome of the application is known, you should arrange to meet with the member of staff to discuss this. This relates to both successful and unsuccessful applicants. Please provide a copy of your Head of School Evaluation as well as feedback from the University Promotion Committee and discuss both with the member of staff as part of this meeting.

For those who have been unsuccessful, you should meet with them to discuss the feedback provided in detail, what steps they can take to address this and what support you can provide them to help them going forward. Providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants should be prioritised in order that there is no delay to the appeals process. For staff who have been successful, you should meet to discuss this success, to congratulate them and take the opportunity to consider future work priorities.

**10. Further information**

If you have any queries regarding this guidance please contact your HR Adviser/Partner.