

ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS PROCEDURE 2016/17

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ACADEMIC STAFF PROMOTIONS PROCEDURE

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 This procedure adheres to the principles of the Charter of Incorporation of Aston University and of its Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 1.2 The basis of academic promotion is assessment by one's peers. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all applications for promotion are treated in a fair and impartial way, and in line with the strategic aims and objectives of the University. The University is committed to act in a manner which does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, in its promotion criteria and decisions. It also recognises the need to take into account individual circumstances which may have resulted in a restricted opportunity for a staff member to perform to his or her potential. Examples of such circumstances are given under the heading "Personal and Individual Circumstances". Promotion at Aston is not just about the standing of an individual, but achievement must be placed in the context of contribution to the development and success of the University and its aims and objectives. Citizenship is a pre-requisite for promotion at all levels.
- 1.3 Consideration of all proposals for promotion will involve the assessment of an individual's overall contributions to the strategic objectives of the University and their School. These will be judged under the following areas. Promotion to each grade is normally open to those able to demonstrate:
- **excellence** in research or
 - **excellence** in learning and teaching or
 - in exceptional circumstances, **excellence** in contribution to external engagement on behalf of the University will be considered
 - regardless of area of excellence claimed and level of promotion, all applicants must demonstrate citizenship and provide evidence as part of their case
- 1.4 Candidates must clearly identify in their applications which of the three assessment areas they believe to be of excellence in their application. Whichever area is selected as excellent for the purpose of the application, candidates must also demonstrate their **ability and effectiveness** in the **other two areas**. Candidates are advised that in most cases only one area of excellence should be claimed.

2. ACADEMIC ROLE PROFILES AND PROMOTIONS CRITERIA

- 2.1 Details of the roles and responsibilities associated with each academic grade are given in the University's academic role profiles, which can be found on the HR Department's website <http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/hr/era/teaching-and-research-profiles/>. Applicants should note that the academic role profiles focus on the main features of jobs within the University, and are not detailed descriptions of the activities of particular jobs. They provide an indication of the minimum level of the activity which should be undertaken within each academic grade. Applicants for promotion are not required to provide evidence that they are undertaking every aspect of a role profile.
- 2.2 The promotion criteria (Appendix A) indicate the type of evidence that is required for promotion at each level. Executive Deans (and line managers/PDR Reviewers) should be encouraging staff (where appropriate) to undertake some duties identifiable as characteristic of the grade above their current one before they seek to be promoted. Evidence of such activities will strengthen the case for promotion.

3. PROMOTIONS PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Each year, the Vice-Chancellor or their nominee will initiate a call for academic staff promotions. Applications for promotion will be invited from Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Readers, and will be considered on the basis of the criteria in Appendix A.
- 3.2 As part of the academic promotions round, Executive Deans may also make a case for individual Teaching and Clinical Staff to be put forward for promotion to Teaching Fellows (Grade 9) or to Senior Teaching Fellow (Grade 10).
- 3.3 Every Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader and Teaching Fellow should be reviewed to identify whether they are ready for promotion every year as part of the annual PDR process.
- 3.4 The arrangements for reviewing Lecturers at Grade 8, with a view to promoting them to Lecturer Grade 9 fall within this review. The procedure is set out at Appendix C. Applicants should complete the application form for progression to Grade 9. At this level there is no need to specify a focus in any one area of excellence (research, teaching and learning or external engagement).
- 3.5 Academics wishing to apply for promotion to Senior Lecturer and above should indicate the level of promotion and the grounds on which they wish to be considered on the Application Form for Promotion to Senior Lecturer and above.
- 3.6 The Executive Dean (or his/her nominee) should be available to discuss applications with individual members of staff prior to the deadline for submitting applications. Applicants should approach their Executive Dean (or nominee) and Head of Subject Group for advice and guidance on their application, and also to talk to other relevant individuals such as other members of the Professoriate.
- 3.7 Briefing sessions will also be held by the Provost and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise which staff members wishing to explore applying for promotion must attend. The Provost and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise will also be available to staff for follow-up discussions on a one-to-one basis. Guidance given by senior academics is provided to assist in making an effective application and will not indicate success or otherwise of the application. Decision-making is carried out by the relevant Committee.
- 3.8 Executive Deans, their nominees and Heads of Subject Group are also encouraged to attend annual briefing sessions.
- 3.9 Applicants should normally have been employed at their current grade for at least one year before applying for promotion. Following a promotion it will generally take a number of years to reach the next level.
- 3.10 The School Promotions Committee will evaluate the level of achievement and overall strength of the application against the promotion criteria before deciding which applications to submit to the University Promotions Committee for further consideration.
- 3.11 The School Promotions Committee will consider whether the referees named by candidates at Senior Lecturer/Senior Teaching Fellow and above are appropriate. If necessary the School Committee will advise an individual to amend their referee details before submission to University Committee.

- 3.12 The Executive Dean (or nominee) will inform those whose applications the Committee recommends should not proceed of the reasons for this decision. Candidates who are not successful at this stage will be given feedback by their Executive Dean (or nominee) on what they need to do to meet the criteria for promotion. Notes will be taken by HR to support this.
- 3.13 Individuals whom the School Promotions Committee have decided should not proceed to a University Promotions Committee may decide to submit an unsupported application to the University Promotions Committee for further consideration.
- 3.14 The University Promotions Committee will consider all applications for promotion against the promotion criteria, and will take into account comments from referees. Where applications are for Readerships or Personal Chairs, comments and advice will be sought from external assessors, identified by the Executive Dean, the Provost, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise and the Professoriate. At least one of these will be from an institution beyond the UK.
- 3.15 The University Promotions Committee will recommend a Promotions Interview Board for all Personal Chair candidates.
- 3.16 For promotions to other grades, the University Promotions Committee will determine the success of the application. As a quality control mechanism for the process, a proportion of candidates at each level may be selected by the University Promotions Committee to proceed to a Promotions Interview Board.
- 3.17 Where the information submitted by a candidate requires further clarification, the University Promotions Committee can decide that any application should proceed to a Promotions Interview Board or further external assessment should be sought.
- 3.18 Where applications are submitted to a Promotions Interview Board for consideration, the Board should be similar in composition to an Appointments Board for the relevant levels. The Vice Chancellor will normally chair Professorial Boards, and the Provost will be a member of the Board. The Provost will normally chair Readership level Boards.
- 3.19 The effective date for promotions to Senior Lecturer, Senior Teaching Fellow and above will be 1 August, the start of the University financial year following the launch of the promotions review. Progression from Grade 8 to Grade 9 will take effect from 1 April.
- 3.20 Candidates who are not promoted will be given feedback from their Executive Dean (or nominee) on what they need to do to meet the criteria for promotion. Notes will be taken by HR to support this. Given the time necessary to make a significant improvement in academic standing, applications which are unsuccessful at the University stage will normally be considered no earlier than two years from the original application.
- 3.21 There is an appeals procedure (detailed below).
- 3.22 Exceptionally it may be necessary to consider special cases for promotion at times other than the annual promotions cycle. This provision is not available as a route for late submissions. Special cases must be supported by the relevant Executive Dean, who should prepare a report, describing the exceptional circumstances, for the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of the University Promotions Committee. If it is accepted that the case merits review outside of the normal annual cycle, consideration of the academic

case for promotion will follow a procedure similar (except in timing) to that for the normal annual Promotions Review. This will include completion, by the individual, of an Academic Staff Promotion Application Form.

- 3.23 The Executive have agreed that Executive Deans should be able to make a case for individual Teaching and Clinical staff to be put forward for promotion to Teaching Fellows (Grade 9) via School Promotion Committees or to Senior Teaching Fellow (Grade 10) via the University Promotions Committee as part of the Academic Promotions round. The criteria for such promotions is set out at Appendix E. Applications should be supported by a written case from the Executive Dean, submitted at the time of application.

4. REFEREES AND EXTERNAL ASSESSORS

- 4.1 Applicants should nominate **referees** who are sufficiently familiar with the applicant's work to comment meaningfully on the application. Referees should generally be professors, or people of professorial standing, familiar with the standards of promotion within UK research-led universities. **Internal referees are not normally acceptable.** Ex-Aston staff are generally not considered to be external referees. Where applications are at Readership or Professorial level, a balance of UK and international referees and assessors should be identified.
- 4.2 **External Assessors** will be identified by relevant senior members of the University e.g. Executive Dean, Professoriate, the Provost, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, and should be (as far as possible) independent of the applicant. These assessors should be professors, or people of professorial standing, familiar with the standards for promotion within UK research-led universities. For applications at Professorial and Readership level, a balance of UK and international referees should be identified. External Assessors should not include applicants' PhD supervisors or co-authors and should normally be kept confidential from the applicant. When nominating assessors, Executive Deans should be mindful of the reputation of the institution/subject area of the proposed assessor. The assessor's institution can have a bearing on the authority they bring. **Executive Deans must ensure that nominated external assessors are able and willing to provide assessments prior to submitting their names.**
- 4.3 For promotion to each level, the final list of referees and external assessors who are to be consulted will be selected from names presented by the candidate and the Executive Dean.
- 4.4 The number of referees and external assessors is as follows:

	Referees	External Assessors	
Senior Lecturer	3	0 *	* the School/University Promotions Committee reserves the right to request external assessors if required
Reader	3	3	At least one referee and two EAs will be consulted. One assessor should be international.
Chair	3	3	At least one of each to be international. At least two referees and two EAs will be consulted.

5. PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 5.1 If applicants have any personal and/or individual circumstances which they wish the Promotions Committee to take into account, these should be outlined in a statement attached to the application.
- 5.2 Applicants are strongly encouraged to bring such circumstances to the notice of the Promotions Committee. Examples of relevant circumstances include, but are not restricted to:
- a) Family and domestic matters, including:
 - absence on maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave and arrangements on return to work following these periods of leave;
 - part-time working or other flexible working arrangements;
 - time spent acting as a carer or other domestic commitments.
 - b) Disability, ill-health and injury, including:
 - any disability to which the Equality Act 2010 applies, including both permanent disabilities, progressive illnesses from the point of diagnosis and any temporary disability with a duration of 12 months or more;
 - absence from work on the advice of a registered medical practitioner.
 - c) Other absences which the institution is legally obliged to permit, such as absences for religious observance or absence arising out of responsibility as a representative of the workforce.

6. APPEALS PROCEDURE

Applicants not promoted may appeal on the following grounds. There was a defect in the procedure followed or a misunderstanding or misinterpretation by a Promotion Committee or Board of some significant factual element of the submission.

- 6.2 A written appeal should be made to the Chief of Operations and Estates who, having taken advice from the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, will determine whether or not there has been a significant procedural defect or misunderstanding. The Chief of Operations and Estates shall have access to all papers submitted to the University Promotions Committee and where applicable the Promotions Interview Board. If the Chief of Operations and Estates is satisfied that there has been a significant defect in the procedure followed or a misinterpretation of a significant factual element, the relevant Promotions Committee or Board shall re-examine the case.
- 6.3 The outcome of this re-examination will be final.

7. CONSTITUTION OF UNIVERSITY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

- 7.1 The University Promotions Committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and comprises the Provost, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, Executive Deans and the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development or their representative. A member of the HR team will act as Secretary.

8. CONSTITUTION OF SCHOOL PROMOTIONS COMMITTEES

- 8.1 The constitution of a School Promotion Committee is at the discretion of the relevant Executive Dean, but must be within the following parameters. The School Promotions Committee must be chaired by the Executive Dean. A majority of members should be professors and the Committee should include a member of the HR team. The Provost and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise should be invited to attend and/or submit comments on the applications.

9. CRITERIA ON WHICH PROMOTIONS ARE BASED

9.1 An indication of the type of evidence which may be considered under each of the three areas are outlined below. Applicants should ensure that their CV includes this evidence in order for their case to be considered fully. These lists are not exhaustive but give an indication of the information which can help demonstrate achievement in the categories. Where applicants show a particularly strong record of achievement against one or more of, for example, the research indicators, this will be taken into account in evaluating the overall level of achievement for research.

9.2 RESEARCH

Defined as the contribution to the advancement of a subject/profession by research and scholarship.

Types of evidence which may be presented include:

- publications (academic papers/refereed journal articles, books/monographs);
- research impact case studies;
- external research grant funding;
- research students supervised;
- patents (applied for and granted);
- invited lectures and seminars;
- plenary and invited presentations;
- invitations to join conference organizing committees, chair sessions, deliver keynote lectures;
- recognition in the form of awards and prizes for research;
- membership/fellowship of professional bodies;
- collaboration with other academics within the University;
- participation in international research collaborations (this must include evidence of impact);
- other indicators including various forms of research impact.

To evidence their achievements in research, applicants should ensure their CV lists:

a) Publications in peer-reviewed journals and/or books.

- A full list of their career research publications of joint or sole authorship, publications in refereed journals, and other articles, papers and conference proceedings
- other recognised research-based articles in refereed publications
- book(s) and monographs
- presentations of research findings at conferences.

Evidence should be presented as a conventional scholarly publication list. Where a paper has multiple authors, the corresponding author (i.e. the person with whom the journal corresponds) should be underlined. Where there are joint publications, candidates should indicate whether they are the principal or lead author, a co-author or a contributor, and provide a clear statement of their personal intellectual contribution to the publication. Only work that has been published or accepted for publication should be included. Applicants should provide an estimated ranking for their publications, in line with the approach their School is taking for the REF, from 1* to 4*. Where possible and in particular for publications which are ranked as 3* or 4*, supporting evidence should be provided, including journal impact factors and citations. Where research is cited as one of the primary criteria for promotion, the title and URL link within the Aston Research Repository for up to three key articles or book chapters should be included by pasting the URL or by copying and pasting from the publication

page or search page from Aston Research Explorer
<https://research.aston.ac.uk.uk/portal/en/>

b) External grants awarded

- Details of external grants awarded, specifying the amounts applied for and awarded, the funding body, the lead investigator(s), the principal investigator(s), and any other collaborators or partners. Where relevant, the grading of the grant applications should be included, together with any formal evaluations of final grant reports.

Please note candidates may include details of funding applications whose outcome is awaited, but they should not include details of unsuccessful bids.

c) Esteem indicators

- Organisation of major academic conferences/meetings
- Award of medals, prizes or other academic distinctions by learned societies

d) Patents held

- List patents held or applied for

e) Research students supervised

- List the names of students, their area of research/thesis title, level (i.e. doctoral or masters), year of completion, the supervisory role played (i.e. main or associate supervisor).

f) Other evidence of contributions to research

This could include:

- Membership of editorial board(s)
- Refereeing of articles for peer-reviewed academic journals
- Refereeing of grant applications by research councils and other major funding bodies
- Other contributions to the public understanding of the subject area
- International and business collaborations.

g) International Strategy

- Lead an active international research group that includes international PhD students
- Demonstrate international co-authorship on papers with excellent international universities

9.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING

Defined as contribution to the advancement of a particular subject area/profession through learning and teaching via impact on student learning experience and achievement and scholarship. Evidence of critical reflective practice is required of all applicants. Reflective practice is defined as “the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice” (Boud et al 1985).

Types of evidence which may be presented include:

- formal teaching qualifications;
- fellowship of the HEA (see Appendix A Criteria for Promotion for the level of fellowship required for the different levels of promotion);
- active and reflective engagement with student feedback processes;
- development of innovative course materials and forms of delivery;

- evidence of effective leadership in learning and teaching including invitations to speak at external meetings and join/lead national and international committees and reviews;
- publications including contributions to textbooks, journals and conferences and other forms of dissemination;
- external recognition in the form of membership and fellowship of professional organizations, collaborations (this must include evidence of impact), awards and prizes for teaching;
- positive impact on the student experience and acquisition of external funding for research and/or developments in learning & teaching.

Evidence should be presented in the form of a list summarising achievements where relevant. This should be accompanied by an analysis of student feedback within the case for promotion. Module reflection forms and centrally administered student feedback should be provided as appendices.

To evidence their achievements in Learning and Teaching, applicants should ensure their CV lists:

a) Ability to communicate the discipline in a learning & teaching context

- PGCPP or other comparable recognized teaching qualification
- Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) (see Appendix F)
- Independent peer reviews of teaching practice (these should normally be arranged through CLIPP or your Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching)
- Published, referenced papers on experience of applying learning & teaching theory
- Conference presentations

b) Evidence of quality and innovation in teaching

This should take the form of an assessment of the innovations introduced such as:

- development of innovative teaching materials or methodologies
- teaching innovation and course development, course design and administration at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels
- contributions to the development of new approaches to course design, learning and teaching and assessment practice within the School/University
- contributions to the teaching curriculum ensuring students at PG and UG are informed of the latest research
- contributions (e.g. textbooks, articles or development of computer schemes) that have informed the way in which the subject is taught within the discipline/School/University
- development and/or design of learning and teaching resources
- clinical teaching, if appropriate, evidence of clinical relevance, demonstrated by linking teaching with “evidence-based health care”

c) Evidence of critical reflective practice

- analysis of the impact of good teaching practice on student feedback

To be attached as appendices to the application form:

- summary of student feedback to be supplied by the central feedback system
- completed Module Reflection forms

d) National/international profile for learning & teaching

- involvement in national learning & teaching projects and/or networks
- external examining
- contributions to national curriculum debate in the subject area
- contributions, e.g. textbooks, articles or development of computer schemes that have shaped the way in which the subject is taught
- prizes or awards for learning and teaching contributions
- engagement with international alumni in curriculum design and placement opportunities
- evidence of internationalisation in programme development with high quality partners
- innovative approaches to enhance international student recruitment.

e) Leadership in learning & teaching and its impact on curriculum development, the enhancement of the subject area and positive impact on the student experience

- National Teaching Fellowship or equivalent external accreditation
- an evidenced account of leadership in learning & teaching and its impact internally, externally and on the student experience
- involvement in learning and teaching at an institutional, national or international level, for example running seminars, workshops or specialist courses in this or other universities
- collaborative teaching across subject and disciplinary boundaries that demonstrate a contribution to interdisciplinary/professional education
- the development and the building of teams consistent with the grade of promotion applied for
- acting as an innovator/champion in Learning and Teaching for the School/University/nationally/internationally
- evidence of improvements in student feedback eg positive student comments, increased student feedback scores, improved NSS results etc
- obtaining external funding for pedagogic research and/or other developments in learning and teaching

9.4 CONTRIBUTION TO EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT:

This is defined as the contribution to the wider external mission of the University, including leadership and management, community engagement and external professional activities.

Types of evidence which may be presented include:

- leadership and senior level management roles in externally funded projects
- contribution to businesses, the public sector and the community relevant to the University's mission
- enhancing the University's reputation and external profile by taking leadership roles in professional and scholarly bodies
- contributions to the development of government policy or standards
- impact based on research outputs.

To evidence their achievements in External Engagement, applicants should ensure their CV lists:

a) Leadership and senior level management of externally funded projects

- project and/or financial management for large projects including interdisciplinary groups that have a regional, national or international profile;

b) Contribution to businesses, public sector and the community

- innovation and knowledge transfer
- contribution to the successful commercialisation of patents, inventions and any other exploitable intellectual property
- contribution to culture and cultural enrichment
- contribution to industry, commerce and the public services
- advising government bodies on operational improvements (as opposed to improvements in policy or standards)

c) Enhancing the University's reputation/profile with professional/scholarly bodies

- leadership in work that has made a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge and/or its application to the subject area/professional practice/policy-making at a national level
- leading the public understanding of one's subject at a national or international level
- leadership/senior roles in academic quality assurance assessments, validation panels, etc, at external institutions

d) Contribution to the development of Government policy and standards

- Contribution to work that has made a significant input to government policy-making (UK or overseas), including references to specific policy documents and their impact
- Contribution to work that has made a significant input to the setting of standards (national or international), including references to specific standards documents and their impact.

e) Impact based on research outputs of at least 2* quality published in the previous 20 years.

This should be presented as a summary of the impact to one or more areas of the economy, society, culture, public policy and services, health, production, environment, international development or quality of life whether regionally, national or internationally.

- The beneficiaries of the impact should be clearly identified e.g. individuals, organisations, communities, regions.
- A description of the underpinning research should be provided by the applicant.
- The originality of the impact must be supported by independent sources/ external assessors and additional indicators of quality given (e.g. evidence of peer-reviewed external funding of the published research)
- The contribution of the individual to the impact must be clearly specified and the contributions of others acknowledged.

f) International engagement

Influence policy on matters relating to international students, research and business links.

10. FORMAT OF APPLICATIONS

10.1 The School and University Promotion Committees take into account all relevant factors that have had an effect on an individual's career profile and on the volume of output. Applicants should include:

- a) A comprehensive descriptive CV, including all of the areas of evidence of achievement which apply, full publications list with links to the three publications the applicant believes are their strongest with Aston Research Explorer, a link to the applicant's website.
- b) A completed application (**not exceeding five pages in total excluding the front page form**) which includes the following:
 - 10.1.1. the level of application and criteria on which the application is based
 - 10.1.2. a summary of the case for promotion against each of the criteria, referring to the guidance, highlighting the most significant achievements and drawing attention to any specific issues relevant to the case
 - 10.1.3. the applicant's short to medium term plans for each area of their application: research; learning & teaching; contribution to the external engagement on behalf of the University; citizenship activity in the School and wider University
 - 10.1.4. the names, addresses and contact details of the appropriate number of referees
 - 10.1.5. any personal/individual circumstances
- c) **other than the CV, the only appendices to the application form should be:**
 - Student feedback produced as part of the centrally administered module questionnaire where this is available (for the last two years)
 - Module Reflection forms (for the last two years)
 - **These are compulsory for ALL applicants.**

10.2 All pages of the application and appendices should be numbered and presented in an electronic format to the relevant School HR Business Partner in a file labelled with the applicant's name and that of their School. It is important for ease and consistency of consideration that applications are set out in accordance with the specified guidelines.

Helen Higson
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