



University of Essex



Annual review procedures for Academic Staff

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Introduction

1.1 The University Strategy 2019-25 sets out our mission of excellence in education and research, for the benefit of individuals and communities. Our priority is to develop and enable every student and every staff member to realise the full potential of their Essex Spirit. The support we give to new staff on Pathway to Permanency and those seeking promotion is intended to help them to develop and realise their potential.

1.2 The criteria for Pathway to Permanency and promotion are designed to set clear standards so that in a fully transparent way our academic staff know the achievements necessary for academic permanency and promotion within different categories of academic staff.

1.3 In pursuing its mission, the University's activities, behaviours and decision-making are underpinned by the following core values, to which all members of the academic community are expected to subscribe: inclusion, partnership and community.

Scope and eligibility

1.4 The annual review procedures for academic permanency apply to all academic staff on a Pathway to Permanency contract.¹

1.5 Where, by exception, a shorter Pathway to Permanency contract has been agreed by the Executive Dean for fixed term contracts, the annual review procedures for academic permanency will still apply.

1.6 The annual review procedures for promotion apply to academic staff appointed to a contract with academic permanency or who have been confirmed as having academic permanency following successful completion of Pathway to Permanency. Individuals may be considered for academic permanency and promotion within the same annual review cycle where they can demonstrate a significant and sustained contribution at the higher level.

1.7 Academic Staffing Body (ASC) is the sole locus for decisions on academic staff promotion and Pathway to Permanency. ASC oversees Pathway to Permanency, including approval of Academic Development Agreements and the granting of academic permanency and promotion.

¹ Academic staff includes those members of staff on academic contracts, including Academic staff with Education and Research (ASER) responsibilities; Academic staff primarily with Education responsibilities (ASE); and Academic staff primarily with Research responsibilities (ASR).

1.8 The award of discretionary increments, bonuses and professorial pay are all considered by Remuneration Committee (or equivalent for Grades 7–10) and thus fall outside the scope of procedures for permanency and promotions.

Equity of treatment

1.9. The University is committed to treating staff in a fair and transparent way consistent with our commitment to diversity and inclusion and based on good employment practice.

1.10 Each category of academic staff is equally valued by the University, and each category and grade contains a clear career ladder with published criteria for achievements.

1.11 Consideration will be given to those who have had a career break, or have a disability or have other defined individual circumstances. Applicants should use the “Any other relevant information” section of the application form to detail any such circumstances they wish to be taken into consideration.

1.12 Equality and diversity data will be collected on all applications to allow continued monitoring and identification of any concerns around equity of treatment for protected groups.

Section 2 – Applications for Pathway to Permanency

2.1 The University’s Pathway to Permanency process is designed to provide support and opportunity to Pathway to Permanency academics to allow them to demonstrate the standards required for academic permanency to be granted by the end of the process.

2.2 All Pathway to Permanency academics are allocated an Academic Adviser, and Academic Development Agreements are co-developed and agreed, and approved by Heads of Department² and Executive Deans. These should contain interim and final objectives for achievement in all categories, as well as indications of how evidence of performance will be assessed (e.g. SAMT scores for teaching, peer-review of teaching, quality of papers published, evidence of grant-writing and submissions). Formal reviews should take place at 18 months (interim) and towards the end of the Pathway to Permanency period (final), alongside regular informal discussions and appraisals. Each year, Academic Staffing Committee will review all new Academic Development Agreements.

² Department is used as an inclusive term for the relevant Department, School, Centre or Institute.

2.3 Should the performance of a Pathway to Permanency academic be unsatisfactory, the Head of Department should notify their Faculty HR Manager and Executive Dean as soon as possible during the Pathway to Permanency period to ensure appropriate support and guidance is given. The member of staff should be given sufficient opportunity to demonstrate improvement prior to the end of their Pathway to Permanency period. Further guidance can be found in the [Pathway to Permanency: guidance for Heads of Department and Academic Advisers](#).

2.4 Academic Development Agreements should contain clear objectives that if achieved should result in the granting of academic permanency. Academic Advisers and Heads of Department have a responsibility to ensure that each Pathway to Permanency academic has the necessary support and opportunities to achieve academic permanency.

2.5 If a Pathway to Permanency academic has not met the objectives outlined in their Academic Development Agreement, the Executive Dean will invite the member of staff to attend a formal meeting, with a representative from HR, prior to the relevant meeting of Academic Staffing Committee (ASC). The member of staff will be entitled to be accompanied to the meeting by a colleague or Trade Union Representative. The purpose of this meeting is to allow the member of staff the opportunity to present their case to the Executive Dean. Following the meeting with the member of staff, the Executive Dean will make a recommendation to ASC. ASC makes the final decision.

2.6 Movement across pathways (ASER, ASE and ASR) will not be permitted through a decision of ASC. Changes of contract are a matter of staffing policy involving the HoD, Executive Deans and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

2.7 Applications for academic permanency must be submitted to a meeting of the ASC by the Head of the academic department on behalf of the Pathway to Permanency academic, prior to the end-date of the Pathway to Permanency period as detailed in the contract of employment.

2.8 Successful completion of Pathway to Permanency leads to confirmation of academic permanency. If a fixed term member of staff is appointed to a permanent contract, they will need to undertake Pathway to Permanency.

2.9 ASC will consider whether the Pathway to Permanency academic has fulfilled the objectives outlined in their Academic Development Agreement and achieved the level of performance applicable to their grade. The Committee will then decide whether or not to grant academic permanency.

2.10 The Committee has the discretion to extend the Pathway to Permanency period for up to one year, where it decides that circumstances have impacted on the employee's opportunity to demonstrate satisfactory performance or achievement.

2.11 Normally, Pathway to Permanency will be for three years, but during their first or second year where the member of staff can demonstrate that all elements of their Academic Development Agreement have successfully been met and they have the support of the Head of Department, the Head of Department can advise the individual to apply for early academic permanency by completing the Pathway to Permanency Application form and submitting it to the Department by an agreed date.

Application process

2.12 The applicant completes the Pathway to Permanency application form and submits it to the Head of Department by the internal deadline set within the department.

2.13 A meeting of the senior staff³ within the department is held to discuss the merits of each application against the published criteria.

2.14 The Head of Department completes the Pathway to Permanency report form on behalf of the senior staff. Any inaccuracies or mistakes identified within the application should be fed back to the applicant and corrected in the report.

2.15 Applications are reviewed by the Head of Department in conjunction with the Director of Research (if applicable), Director of Education and Executive Dean with a representative of HR in attendance. The report form must be signed by both the Head of Department and Executive Dean.

2.16 All Pathway to Permanency applications must come forward to ASC for consideration prior to the end of the Pathway to Permanency period and in accordance with the published timetable.

2.17 The Head of Department submits the application form, HoD report form and Academic Plan with the final report to the Committee Secretary in electronic format by the relevant deadline in the Annual Review timetable.

2.18 All applications for academic permanency are considered at the relevant meeting of ASC. Executive Deans present cases from their Faculty, with outcomes discussed and agreed by the whole committee.

³ Each department may decide their internal process for appointment of Senior Staff for this purpose. This could comprise:

- i) reviewing applications at the Senior Staff meeting;
- ii) constituting a group of senior leaders within the department (e.g. Directors of Education, Research and Employability);
- iii) seeking the views of those senior staff most closely involved in working with individuals for example a module lead/supervisor or Head of Group;
- iv) seeking the collective views of the Professoriate alone.

The departmental process will be agreed in advance with the Executive Dean.

2.19 Applicants and Heads of Department will be notified in writing of the decision as soon as possible following the meeting.

Section 3 – Applications for promotion

3.1 We have three categories of academic staff:

- a Academic staff with education and research responsibilities (ASER);
- b Academic Staff primarily with education responsibilities (ASE);
- c Academic Staff primarily with research responsibilities (ASR).

3.2 Promotion through the grade structure reflects the distinctive roles and contribution made by members of staff.

3.3 For ASE and ASER staff, applications for promotion will be reviewed against three categories. ASR staff will be reviewed against a minimum of two criteria:

- a Academic staff with education and research responsibilities (ASER): i) Research, ii) Education; and iii) Leadership/Citizenship.
- b Academic Staff primarily with education responsibilities (ASE): i) Scholarship/Professional Practice; ii) Education; and iii) Leadership/Citizenship.
- c Academic Staff primarily with research responsibilities (ASR): i) Research; ii) Education (where relevant); and iii) Leadership/Citizenship.

3.4 ASC will seek evidence of significant and sustained performance at the levels cited, paying particular attention to those achievements since recruitment into the role or the most recent promotion.

3.5 All cases for promotion should contain indications of how evidence of achievements has been met (e.g. evidence of your contribution to excellence in teaching, quality of papers published, evidence of externally-funded activity).

3.6 Every case is unique and thus all applications will be considered on their own merits against the published criteria. Both applicants and Heads of Department should use the published criteria to guide the presentation of evidence of achievements.

3.7 Candidates may only submit one application for promotion within each annual review cycle.

Application process

3.8 The applicant completes the Promotion application form and submits to the Head of Department by the deadline set within the department.

3.9 A meeting of the senior staff within the department is held to discuss the merits of each application against the criteria. When applications for promotion to Professor are being considered, all non-Professorial staff, apart from those holding senior roles such as Director of Research and Director of Education, should leave the meeting.

3.10 The Head of Department completes the Promotion report form on behalf of the senior staff.

3.11 Applications are reviewed by the Head of Department in conjunction with the Director of Research and Director of Education, Executive Dean, with the Faculty Employee Relations Adviser in attendance. The report form must be signed by both the Head of Department and Executive Dean.

3.12 In cases where it is clear that an application has not met the criteria and is therefore not supported either by the Head of Department or Executive Dean, applicants will be given the opportunity to receive constructive feedback and can decide whether to withdraw their application before it is considered by ASC.

3.13 The Head of Department submits the application forms and report forms in electronic format to the ASC Secretary by the deadline in the Annual Review timetable. The HoD will share their report with the applicant.

3.14 Applications are considered at the relevant meeting of Academic Staffing Committee. Executive Deans will present cases from their Faculty, with outcomes discussed and then agreed by the whole Committee.

3.15 Applicants and Heads of Department will be notified in writing as soon as possible following the relevant meeting.

3.16 If promotion is confirmed, the effective date will be 1 October following the meeting.

External assessment

3.17 Two reports from external assessors will be sought for promotion to Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Fellow, Reader and Professor. Once

a case for promotion has been established, the Head of Department, in discussion with the applicant, should provide a list of four possible external assessors to the Executive Dean for each application. Applicants may also provide names of assessors whom it would not be appropriate to ask. The Executive Dean will select a minimum of two assessors and confirm these to their Faculty HR Manager who will request a report from each.

3.18 In all cases external assessors:

- Should have a recognised international reputation in the relevant field, unless otherwise agreed by the Executive Dean, and be able to give an objective, impartial opinion of the candidate's performance with explicit reference to the relevant criteria;
- Should be asked to assess the promotion case on all the categories completed (as evaluated against the published criteria);
- Should not have, or have had, a close working relationship with the candidate (e.g. PhD supervisor, co-researcher).

Feedback

3.19 All unsuccessful applicants will be given the opportunity to meet with their Executive Dean to discuss feedback.

Section 4 - Appeals

4.1 If the member of academic staff wishes to appeal against a decision not to grant academic permanency or promotion, they must submit their appeal in writing to the Director of Human Resources within 14 calendar days of the date of the outcome letter. An appeal is not a re-hearing of the case and can only be made on one or more of the following grounds:

- A procedural fault that may have influenced ASC's original decision;
- A significant error of material fact that may have influenced ASC's original decision.

4.2 A written management response will also be sought from the Head of Department and Executive Dean in response to the appeal, which should explicitly correct any mistakes or inaccuracies contained within the application or written appeal.

4.3 A senior member of academic staff at Professorial level appointed by the Chair of ASC will act as Chair of the appeals panel. The Chair will establish whether a prima facie case exists and where such a case is established an appeals panel will be constituted to meet from the beginning of the following term.

4.4 No member of the panel should have been involved in making the original decision or be a member of the appellant's Department. The panel will also consist of one Professor nominated by the appellant (and usually in consultation with UCU), and one Professor within the relevant Faculty appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. For appeals against a decision not to grant academic permanency, the panel will also include a member of Council.

4.5 The member of staff will have an opportunity to present their case in person and may be accompanied by a colleague or Trades Union Representative. The relevant HoD/ED will present the case for management. The panel will consider only data and evidence received up to the time of the appropriate ASC meeting and decision, including any previous feedback letters from ASC to the appellant. It will then decide whether:

- The case should be referred back to Academic Staffing Committee due to a procedural error or significant error of material fact. In this instance the appeals panel will provide a full report to the committee of their findings, and ASC will re-consider the case in the light of the report and come to a final decision.
- The appeal is dismissed and therefore the original decision still stands.

Or, for Pathway to Permanency cases only:

- To uphold the appeal, in which case the applicant will be re-instated

4.6 In circumstances where there is no consensus on a decision among the panel, the Chair will have the casting vote.

4.7 The Executive Dean from the relevant Faculty and the Chair (or appointee) of Academic Staffing Committee may also be asked to appear before the hearing.