

## Procedures for Assessing Academic Promotion Applications

### Senior Lecturer/Personal Professor Scheme

#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide further guidance for the Academic Promotions Committee (APC) in assessing applications for promotion. This document should be read in conjunction with the Academic Promotions Policy.

#### 2. Committee Membership

Membership of the Academic Promotions Committee will be proposed by the President and approved by Academic Council. The list of approved names will be published on the HR website.

- Deputy President and Registrar (Chair) (ex officio)
- Vice-President for Research (ex officio)
- 2 Full Professors from each College (1 Male, 1 Female)<sup>1</sup>
- 4 President's Nominees, who must be at Senior Lecturer or above (gender to ensure that the Board overall is balanced)
- 2 external members, one from a STEM area, one from an Arts, Humanities or Social Science area, who have significant experience of promotions in an Irish HE setting (to be reviewed after 2 rounds of promotion)

Apart from the ex officio and external members, the membership term of the APC will normally be for three years, which may be renewed, exceptionally, for up to a further three years where consistency and continuity require this. Membership of the APC is subject to review by the President, as required.

In order to ensure continuity and a rolling renewal of membership, the President's first cohort of nominees will serve on the committee for two years. In addition, initially one professorial nominee from each College will serve for three years, and one for four years. All subsequent appointments will be for three years. This is to ensure a rolling turnover of one-third of the Committee each year.

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<sup>1</sup> To be elected by Academic Council.

The Chair of the APC will conduct workshops for candidates approximately one month before the closing date for applications.

The Academic Promotions Committee will be supported administratively by HR, and the Director of HR or nominee shall be in attendance at all meetings.

### **3. Attendance at APC Meetings**

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting is quorate, that is, that there are at least ten members of the APC present, and that at least 40% of those present are female and 40% male. Where this is not the case, the meeting shall be rescheduled.

Attendance will be monitored on an annual basis and, if necessary, recommendations for changing the composition of the APC made to Governing Authority.

### **4. Conflict of Interest**

At the start of each APC meeting members must declare any conflicts of interest.

Members of APC will declare any relationship with a candidate that might be perceived as creating a personal interest or conflict capable of affecting their impartial judgement. Section 3 of the University's Code of Conduct for Staff should be used as a guide on this.<sup>2</sup>

Where an application is being considered from a candidate whose Head of School is a member of the APC, the Head of School will not be excluded from the meeting but will be asked to defer commenting on the application until all other members of the committee have done so.

Members of the APC do not represent Colleges/Schools and there should be no advocacy of individual cases. The role of the APC is to ensure that impartial, fair and consistent consideration is given to each application.

The onus is also put on External Assessors to declare any conflict of interest in assessing an application. The invitation from the APC to the External Assessor will include this request and assessors will be asked to provide details of their level of association with the candidate as part of their assessment. A copy of the conflict of interest guidelines will be sent to External Assessors.

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<sup>2</sup> The Code of Conduct for Staff is at: <https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/oifiganrunai/nonstatute/Code-of-Conduct-for-Staff.pdf>.

All members of APC and all external assessors will be required to sign a conflict of interest declaration.

## 5. Equality Issues

Consideration of equality issues is critical to the effective operation of the University's promotion procedure which is designed to ensure consistency and fairness in decision-making.

The Committee must not raise or discuss any equality issues that are not explicitly referred to by the candidate in their application for promotion.

The APC is committed to non-discrimination on the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of the traveller community. The APC will consider any equality issues in line with the University's Equal Opportunities Policies.<sup>3</sup>

All members of the committee will be required to attend equality and unconscious bias training, as well as training on giving effective feedback.

## 6. Assessment of applications where leave has been stated (instead of Part-Time Staff, Leave of Absence)

A provision exists to recognise the way in which some selection criteria will exclude statistically more women and carers, and to adapt the assessment criteria accordingly. A staff member who has experienced time out from their job for maternity, adoptive, parental, sick leave, disability-related sick leave and carer's leave, will not be able to produce the same quantity of output as a comparable staff member who has not taken time out.

Where documented leave has been indicated in an application, the Academic Promotions Committee will assess output relative to opportunity, i.e. academic output will be counted on a *pro-rata* basis for a staff member who has taken such leave.

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<sup>3</sup> The University's policies in this regard are at: <https://www.nuigalway.ie/equalityanddiversity/policies-procedures/>

## 7. Assessment Procedures

### 7.1. Deadlines and Working Principles

The APC will consider applications that have been submitted to HR by the appropriate deadline. There shall be two such deadlines for 2020: 16.00 on the last working day of January and 16.00 on the last working day of August. There shall be two such deadlines for 2021 and 2022: 16.00 on the last working day of February and 16.00 on the last working day of August.

- Each member of the APC will normally read each application prior to the APC meeting and will contribute to the discussion on each application.
- The APC will work by consensus.
- If a member of the APC is not present at the meeting where a recommendation is made they will confirm their agreement or disagreement with the decision at the subsequent APC meeting.<sup>4</sup>
- The absent member must normally submit a report on the applications prior to the relevant meeting of the APC.

### 7.2. Working Methods – Prima Facie Case

#### 7.2.1. Prior to the Meeting

- Prior to the APC meeting each member of the APC will review each application against the Development Framework for Academic Staff in order to form an individual view as to whether a prima facie case has been established.<sup>5</sup>
- Each member of the Board should form a view against each of the main headings for each candidate.
- Members will not take into consideration any other information in relation to the application or the applicant, nor shall they seek additional information from any individual.
- Exceptionally, where the number of applications is high, the Chair may designate two or more members of the APC as lead readers on subsets of the applications.

#### 7.2.2. During the Meeting

- The Chair will select a member of the APC to lead the assessment of each application, and following consideration by the full committee, a collective decision will be made on whether the candidate has provided sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case.

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<sup>4</sup> Members of the Committee on research sabbatical or absent due to circumstances such as illness etc. will not be required to contribute to the decision-making process.

<sup>5</sup> A prima facie case will exist if the consensus view of the APC is that, subject to the required assessment by external experts, the body of evidence presented across the promotion criteria is likely to merit promotion under the requirements of the scheme.

- Where the APC determines that a candidate has demonstrated a prima facie case, the APC will agree a ranked list of External Assessors from the candidate's list and, separately, from the Head of School/Executive Dean's list<sup>6</sup> and select external assessors, as follows:
  - Promotion to Senior Lecturer: 2 external assessors (1 from the candidate and 1 from the HoS/Executive Dean);
  - Promotion to Personal Professor: 3 external assessors (1 from the candidate and 2 from the HoS/Executive Dean).
- Where the APC determines that a candidate has not established a prima facie case, a member of the APC will be asked to prepare a draft feedback report for consideration and approval by the APC. This report should include a clear rationale for the decision and outline what actions the candidate needs to take in order to ensure that a subsequent application would successfully meet the threshold and progress to the review with external assessor reports. The feedback should provide an indicative timeframe for achieving these actions.
- When all feedback reports are agreed, the APC will finalise the list of candidates who have not established a prima facie case to be forwarded to the President for approval. This will be sent to the President at the same time as the list of recommendations for promotion.

### **7.3. External Assessor Reports**

#### **7.3.1. Role of APC**

Where it has been agreed that external assessors must be sought, members of the APC, working in pairs, will:

- Be assigned a number of applications;
- Review the list of nominated external assessors provided by the candidate and HOS/Executive Dean;
- Agree a ranked list of external assessors for recommendation to the full Committee.

#### **7.3.2. Role of HR**

- HR will contact selected External Assessors in order of ranking by the APC. Where necessary, HR will move to the next selected external assessor on the list until the requisite number of reports have been received;
- Assessors will be given 4 weeks to provide a report.
- The reports will be forwarded to the APC for consideration when the requisite number of external assessor reports have been received by HR;

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<sup>6</sup> This list should be agreed between the relevant Head of School and Executive Dean. In the event of disagreement, the Dean's decision will be final.

- If, for any reason, more than the requisite number of reports is submitted to HR, HR will forward all of the external assessor reports to the APC. If the required number of positive reports is among this number, these shall be considered;
- Should an assessor's report be received by HR that was ranked higher than reports previously received and made available to the APC, the report will not be used unless required due to another report being excluded due to conflict of interest;
- An additional report will only be forwarded to the APC in the event that a report from a higher ranked external assessor is excluded due to a conflict of interest;
- At the end of the process, candidates may access copies of their External Assessor reports by contacting the University's Freedom of Information Office.

#### **7.4. Working Methods – Post-External Assessment**

- The Chair will select a member of the APC to initiate the discussion on the assessment of each application along with the external assessors' reports, against the Development Framework for Academic Staff;
- Each member of the committee present will be given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion;
- Where an assessor in their assessment communicates a conflict of interest, the APC will exclude the assessor's report and an additional report or reports will be obtained. Where the committee seeks additional assessors' reports, the application will be considered at the first opportunity when the additional reports are available;
- The APC will then determine if the candidate has provided sufficient evidence for promotion to the required level, as supported by external assessment.
- Where a candidate is being recommended for promotion, a member of the APC will be asked to prepare a draft feedback report for consideration and approval by the APC at its next scheduled meeting. This report should include a clear rationale for the decision and where appropriate outline any areas of note for special mention.
- Where a candidate is not being recommended for promotion, a member of the APC will be asked to prepare a draft feedback report for consideration and approval by the APC at its next scheduled meeting. This report should include a clear rationale for the decision and outline what actions the candidate might take to ensure that a subsequent application would have a higher likelihood of success. The feedback should provide an indicative timeframe for achieving these actions.
- When all of the feedback reports have been agreed, the APC will finalise the list of recommendations to be forwarded to the President for approval.

## 8. Conclusion of the Process

Following the conclusion of the process:

- The names of candidates recommended for promotion by the APC will be forwarded to the President for approval.
- The names of candidates not recommended for promotion by the APC will also be forwarded to the President for approval.
- Candidates will be informed in writing by the Chair of the Committee of the decision in respect of their application and will be given a feedback report on the reason/s for that decision.
- A candidate who requires copies of her/his External Assessors reports should contact the Freedom of Information Office.
- College Deans and Heads of School will be informed of the outcome of the assessment process and will be provided with a copy of the feedback reports in relation to candidates from their School/College.
- Candidates will also be offered the opportunity for oral feedback. The member of the APC who drafts the candidate feedback will also provide oral feedback to the candidate with the Chair or his/her nominee.
- Following oral feedback, a short note of the feedback meeting will be drafted and retained as a record of the meeting. The note will be sent to the candidate for their review and agreement following the oral feedback meeting.
- UMT will be notified of successful candidates as an item of routine business.
- A list of promoted candidates will be forwarded for noting at the first meeting of both the Governing Authority and Academic Council following the conclusion of the process.
- External Assessors will be advised of the outcome for the candidate for whom he/she provided a reference.
- The effective date of promotion for successful candidates will be the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month following approval by the President of the Academic Promotions Committee's recommendation.

## 9. Notes and Records

Each member of the APC will be expected to make notes in relation to their assessment of each application. Notes should be impersonal, factual and clear as to the comment being made. Notes should not compare candidates but should reference back to the Development Framework for Academic Staff or to statements made by the candidate, the Head of School, Executive Dean, or External Assessors. Individual notes will be passed to the HR administrator and held for a minimum of 12 months. Notes and relevant minutes will be available to candidates on request following the conclusion of the process, including written and oral

feedback. External assessor's reports are provided in confidence (within the framework of FOI legislation) and as such will be retained by HR and candidates may apply for them under FOI.

## **10. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality, by all participants, will be maintained throughout the process. All discussion during the assessment process and any data generated will remain confidential to the members of the Academic Promotions Committee. The names of promoted candidates will not be released until the President has approved the recommendations of the APC and the candidates have been advised accordingly.

## **11. Incomplete Applications**

The APC will not progress incomplete applications. Where an incomplete application is identified by the Committee, this will be referred back to the applicant, who will be invited to address the outstanding issues and re-submit to a subsequent round.

DP&R,  
16.x.2019.