



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

# Contribution Reward Scheme (Professional Services)

Guidance and Procedure

**2025-26**

October 2025

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# Overview of the scheme

The University of Cambridge operates an annual Contribution Reward Scheme (Professional Services) (henceforth referred to as “the scheme”). Under the scheme **eligible employees can be nominated for either one or more contribution increments or a single contribution payment in each annual exercise.**

- **Contribution increments** are awarded in recognition of continued exceptional contribution.
- **Single contribution payments** are awarded to employees in recognition of their contribution in relation to a short-term piece of work or for employees who have reached the top spine point of their grade.

## Important Note

CRS awards should not be used to reward temporary acting-up to a higher grade. Such responsibilities should be compensated through an [Additional Responsibility Payment](#).

If there has been a permanent change to the employee's responsibilities, managers should speak to the appropriate HR School team to discuss further.

# Timetable

Launch		Indicative Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scheme is launched by email from the Director of Human Resources to Awarding Authorities.</li> <li>Awarding Authorities set deadlines for institutions to return submissions and inform institutions.</li> <li>Institutions set deadlines for nominations to be returned and contact eligible employees to confirm the scheme has launched.</li> </ul>		Early October 2025
Nominations Window		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line managers submit nominations for eligible employees in their team by completing form PD30a.</li> <li>Completed nominations should be submitted per institutional instructions.</li> </ul>		By deadline set by institution
Institutional Review of Nominations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutions should complete section D of the nomination forms, confirming whether the case is supported.</li> <li>The institutions should record details of nominations using the nomination spreadsheet and submit the nomination forms and summary spreadsheet to the Awarding Authority for consideration.</li> </ul>		By deadline set by Awarding Authority
Awarding Authority Review of Nominations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awarding Authorities will review and consider all nominations.</li> <li>Awarding Authorities will record the final outcomes and submit them to the HR Reward Team.</li> <li>The HR Reward Team will collate submissions from all Awarding Authorities and, in conjunction with the HR Amendments Team and Payroll, will check the data and raise any queries with the relevant Awarding Authorities.</li> </ul>		February 2026
Outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once all queries are resolved, the HR Reward Team will draft the outcome letters and inform institutions that letters can be issued to applicants.</li> <li>Payments are processed by the HR Amendments Team and Payroll and are made in the April payroll.</li> <li>Contribution increments are awarded with effect from 1 April and single contribution payments are calculated using the 1 April base salary (pro-rated for part-time employees).</li> </ul>		March/April 2026

# Eligibility

Please note that any nominees who do not meet any of the below criteria will not receive an award under this scheme.

## Contribution Increments

To be eligible for an award, employees must:

- be an Academic-Related or Assistant employee in grades 1 to 11;
- be employed at the point the award is processed (i.e. employees who have left the University, or are due to leave the University prior to 15 April, will no longer be eligible to receive an award);
- have been in their nominated role and grade for at least six months prior to 1 October of the year the scheme is launched; and
- not have reached the maximum contribution point for their grade.

## Single Contribution Payments

To be eligible for an award, employees must:

- be an Academic-Related or Assistant employee in grades 1 to 11;
- be employed at the point the award is processed (i.e. employees who have left the University, or are due to leave the University prior to 15 April, will no longer be eligible to receive an award); and
- have been in their nominated role and grade for at least six months within the twelve months prior to 1 October of the year the scheme is launched, provided that:
  - the payment is based on the salary of the role and grade held during that period, and
  - it is funded by the department where that role was performed.

### Important Note

Eligible employees cannot be nominated for both types of awards under the scheme (i.e., they may be nominated for either a contribution increment or a single contribution payment, not both).

# Types of Awards

## Contribution Increments

Contribution increments can be awarded to recognise an employee's continuous exceptional contributions. In most cases, a successful nomination will result in an award of one increment, with an award of two increments available for particularly strong cases. An award of three increments will only be made in very exceptional circumstances.

The number of contribution increments awarded must not exceed the range of the current grade and will not affect the underlying grade of the recipient. Where the resulting salary is still within the range of service-related grade points, the employee will continue to progress to the top of the service-related points as normal. If, however, the resulting salary is within the range of contribution points (i.e. starred points) for the grade, there will be no automatic progression to the next salary point. More information on the University salary scales can be found [here](#).

Awards are effective as of 1 April and are implemented in the April payroll.

### Important Note

For employees in receipt of [Market Pay](#), any increase to base salary will erode the value of the additional payment by an amount equal to the increase in base pay.

## Single Contribution Payments

This is a one-off, non-pensionable payment which can be made in circumstances such as:

- when an employee has reached the top spine point for their grade, which means they have no means of progressing their pay; or
- when an employee has excelled in relation to a short-term piece of work, such as a major but finite project, but does not meet the criterion for continuous exceptional contribution.

The award can be made to individuals, paid at 3% of their base salary, or to teams (where the one-off task/project is a result of the combined efforts of two or more employees), paid at 2% of their base salary. Awards are calculated using base salary (pro-rated for part-time employees) as of 1 April and are payable in the April payroll.

It is not normally appropriate for nominations for single contribution payments to be received for the same or similar reasons for more than two consecutive years for the

same employee as this would indicate that the case aligns more with the criteria for a contribution increment. In the exceptional event of a single contribution payment being requested in the third consecutive year, consideration should be given by the Awarding Authority for a contribution increment in place of the third single contribution payment.

## The Impact of Changing Roles and Regrading

There may be occasions when an employee changes their role or grade following a nomination but before the outcome of the nomination has been confirmed. This section explains what would normally happen in such situations.

### Changing role or regrading of role on or before 1 April in the year the award is made

#### Contribution Increments

If an employee changes role or the role is regraded on or before 1 April, they will no longer be eligible to receive contribution increments as part of the scheme.

#### Single Contribution Payments

If an employee changes role or the role is regraded on or before 1 April, they will still be eligible to receive the payment, but it will be calculated using the salary of the role and grade on which the nomination was based.

If an employee has changed their working hours between 1 October and 1 April, the line manager should contact their Lead HR Business Partner to determine the appropriate payment calculation.

### Changing or regrading of roles after 1 April of the year the award is made

If an employee changes role or the role is regraded after 1 April they will still be eligible to receive the award. In addition, it would normally be expected that their spine point in their new or regraded role would be uplifted in line with the contribution increments, [as per the University's standard procedures](#). The examples below explain this:

#### Example 1 - moving to a new role at a higher grade:

*In October, Alex is in a Grade 6 role, on point 39. Alex is nominated for one contribution increment as part of the scheme. Before the outcome is confirmed, Alex successfully applies for another role and is promoted to Grade 7 with effect from 5 April. In line with the University's standard procedures, as part of this*



*promotion, Alex receives two increments, moving them to Grade 7, point 41. In April, the outcome of Alex's nomination is confirmed as successful. Their 1 April spine point is uplifted to point 40. Their spine point on promotion with effect from 5 April is also uplifted to point 42, so they retain the two-increment award as part of the promotion.*

### **Example 2 - moving to a new role at the same grade:**

*In October, Sam is in a Grade 5 role, on point 36. Sam is nominated for one contribution increment as part of the scheme. Before the outcome is confirmed, Sam successfully applies for another role at the same grade, and transfers to the new role with effect from 5 April. In line with the University's standard procedures, Sam retains their current spine point and salary. In April, the outcome of Sam's nomination is confirmed as successful. Their 1 April spine point is uplifted to point 37. Their spine point on transfer with effect from 5 April is also uplifted to point 37.*

## **Secondments**

If an employee is on secondment at the time of the scheme launch, they may be nominated for an award for their performance in their substantive role provided that:

- They were in their substantive role for at least six months before the start of their secondment.
- If being nominated for contribution increments, they have not yet reached the maximum contribution point for their grade in their substantive role.

The nomination should be considered by the line manager, Head of Institution and Awarding Authority of their substantive role. Any awards received would apply to the substantive role only.

If an employee has been seconded to a different role and has been working in that role for at least six months as of 1 October of the year the scheme is launched, they are eligible to be nominated for an award in their secondment role. Any nomination should be considered by the line manager, Head of Institution and Awarding Authority of their secondment role.

If the secondment role is similar to the substantive role, it would normally be expected that any awards would be applied in both roles, provided the eligibility criteria are met in each. The Awarding Authority should confirm if this is the case. If the secondment role is different to the substantive role, any agreed awards would only be applied to the secondment role (i.e. the role on which the nomination is based).



# Preparing a Nomination

## Important Changes to the Scheme

- **Line manager-led nominations:** Nominations are primarily expected to be submitted by line managers, rather than by employees themselves.
- **Recognition of consistent excellence:** Awards should now recognise sustained and consistently high performance within the role, rather than only contributions that go above and beyond grade expectations.

## Role of Line Managers

Line managers play a central role in this process. They are expected to identify and nominate eligible team members for an award based on observed performance.

Nominations should be based on:

- Ongoing performance monitoring
- Notes or outcomes from [Staff Review and Development \(SRD\)](#) meetings
- Feedback from colleagues, customers, or other relevant stakeholders

Line managers should carefully consider all members of their team, reflecting on each employee's overall performance and contribution over the review period. They should ensure that nominations are made fairly and equitably.

When assessing eligible team members for either contribution increments or single contribution payments, managers should consider the below additional factors:

- Are there any employees who stand out above others in the team in terms of their impact on the team, institution or school?
- The time since the employee last received an incremental point change through either service points or previous contribution increments (this information can be found in the eligibility files sent to institutions). It may be appropriate to prioritise nominations from those who have been on the same spine point for longer, in order to reward their contribution and service.
- The existence of unconscious biases and how these biases might affect how assessments are made and how they affect objective decision-making. Line managers should constructively challenge any potential implicit or explicit biases they observe in the nomination process, whether in themselves or others, to ensure fairness and promote inclusion.

All nominations for an award under the scheme should be made using form PD30a. Line managers should complete sections A and C of the form. The form should then be

submitted per the timetable set by the institution, which will be communicated at the start of the exercise.

## Criteria for Assessing Contribution

When making a nomination, the following criteria should be considered, alongside the additional considerations referred to above.

### Contribution Increments

This award recognises **sustained, consistently strong performance** in the employee's current role.

**When nominating an employee for a contribution increment, line managers should consider the following:**

- Has the employee regularly demonstrated strong performance in their day-to-day responsibilities?
- Have they taken on an additional responsibility within their grade?
- Are they consistently proactive, reliable, and solution-focused?
- Has their work positively impacted their institution or team?
- Have they received positive feedback from colleagues or others?

**Examples of what might justify a contribution increment award may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Consistently performing their role to a high standard.
- Proactively seeking opportunities to gain additional knowledge/skills, which then positively impact the support they provide to their institution or the University.
- Taking on additional responsibilities within the existing grade on an ongoing basis.
- Providing a consistently high standard of contribution and support to their institution or the University.
- Using initiative and problem-solving skills to propose suitable and effective solutions.
- Successfully completing agreed long-term objectives to a high standard.
- Providing a consistently high standard of customer service.
- Demonstrating innovation and resourcefulness regularly, resulting in improved processes.
- Showing leadership qualities which positively encourage team members and colleagues and improve overall team performance (particularly when the employee does not have line management responsibility).

## Single Contribution Payments

This award recognises **strong performance on a specific task, event, or short-term project.**

**When nominating an employee for a single contribution payment managers should consider the following:**

- Was the contribution time-limited and impactful?
- Did the employee demonstrate flexibility, teamwork, or creativity?
- Did their contribution save time, improve service, or support key objectives?
- Did they play a key role in any major projects or changes, contributing to their success?
- Have they received positive feedback from colleagues or others?

**Examples of what might justify a single contribution payment award may include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Completing a significant task or project to a high standard.
- Successfully organising or helping to organise a one-off event, demonstrating commitment, flexibility and adaptability to ensure smooth running before and on the day.
- Successfully tackling an unplanned or unexpected task, crisis/emergency, or incident involving complexity.
- Suggestion or design of an innovative approach, solution or idea for the improvement of a working practice or process within the institution or school.
- Achieving a particularly challenging goal or objective, e.g. overcoming a significant obstacle to ensure a deadline is met.
- Demonstrating outstanding team working, by working together effectively to deliver a large, complex project.

## Self-Nominations

Eligible employees may also nominate themselves for an award but must first discuss their intention to do so with their line manager.

Employees submitting a self-nomination must complete sections A and B of form PD30a before passing it to their line manager. The line manager should then complete section C and submit the form to the Head of Institution, in accordance with the timetable set by the institution.

# Out-of-cycle Awards

There may be exceptional circumstances, particularly arising from urgent retention issues, where it would be appropriate for employees to be put forward for an award of up to three increments outside the normal annual timetable. In such cases, the line manager should complete the PD30b form. It should be signed by the Head of Institution (or their nominee) before it is submitted to the HR Reward Team and Lead HR Business Partner. The nomination will be assessed against the same criteria as nominations submitted during the annual process. The final decision will be made by the Chair of the relevant Awarding Authority and reported at the next Awarding Authority meeting.

The award will be effective from the first day of the month in which the nomination is submitted to the HR Reward Team and Lead HR Business Partner. Only one award may be granted per year; employees who have already received an award through the annual process are ineligible for consideration for an out-of-cycle award.



# Financial Matters

All awards made via this scheme are fully funded by institutions, from Chest and non-Chest sources available to them. No additional budget is provided. In all cases, institutions should ensure that sufficient funding is identified to support nominations for awards under this scheme. Queries concerned with funding should be raised with the relevant Finance Business Partner in the first instance.

Grades and salary points, including on-costs, can be viewed [online](#).

## Guiding Principles

Assessment of contribution made should be clearly related to University, School or Faculty/Department objectives and should recognise achievements and reward behaviours and activities likely to contribute to the future success of the University.

Judgements should be based on objective evidence, and if appropriate, recognise teamwork.

Details of the general principles, including Natural Justice, Fairness and Declaration of Interest, Equal Opportunity, Disability and Allowance for Special Circumstances, and Confidentiality and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) can be found in the Appendix.

### Natural Justice

'Natural Justice' is defined as 'due process of law' or the 'requirements of procedural fairness'. There are two principles:

- no person can be a judge of their own cause; and
- the person must have the opportunity to be 'heard' fairly

Accordingly, all persons involved in the procedure and in the consideration of proposals should be fully conversant with the guidance contained in this document. They should undertake their roles in a manner which is scrupulously fair in relation to proposals that have been submitted, whether or not the guidance makes explicit provision for all circumstances.

### Fairness and Declaration of Interest

If any person involved in the preparation, presentation of documentation, or in the consideration of proposals has a personal interest that may affect the impartial consideration of proposals, or be perceived by others to do so, they should declare this

to the person overseeing that part of the process. If that is the person who has declared an interest, they should be prepared to withdraw from the relevant section of the proceedings, handing over responsibility to another person for that item of business.

With regard to Committees, all members should be aware that:

- a systematic approach in forming a view of a proposal is desirable;
- the process of evaluation is a collective activity and all decisions should be arrived at collectively. (If a member is unable to be present, they may provide a written statement of their view but such written views should be accorded less weight than those expressed in open discussion since written statements provided in absence cannot be challenged in committee); and
- if all members agree immediately on the same overall assessment, this can be accepted without discussion. Differences in individual members' evaluations should be discussed and a consensus reached. Detailed discussion will in most cases lead to collective agreement on the assessment.

## Equal Opportunity

The University's statement of policy is as follows:

The University of Cambridge is committed in its pursuit of academic excellence to equality of opportunity and to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity.

The University is therefore committed to a policy and practice which require that, for students, admission to the University and progression within undergraduate and graduate studies will be determined only by personal merit and by performance. For staff, entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and by the application of criteria which are related to the duties and conditions of each particular post and the needs of the institution concerned.

Subject to statutory provisions no applicant for admission as a student, or for a staff appointment, or student, or member of staff, will be treated less favourably than another on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, marital or parental status, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or age. For students, ability to meet the requirements of the selection criteria for competitive admission and for staff, ability to perform the job, will be the primary consideration.

If any person admitted as a student or appointed as an employee considers that they are suffering from unequal treatment on any of the above grounds in their admission, appointment, or progression through the University, they may make a complaint,

which will be dealt with through the agreed procedures for complaints or grievances or the procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment, as appropriate.

The University will take active steps to promote good practice. In particular it will:

- promote equality of opportunity;
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups, between women and men, and between disabled and non-disabled people;
- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race, sex, disability, and all other grounds set out in the statement on equal opportunities;
- subject its policies to continuous assessment in order to examine how they affect all under-represented groups, especially ethnic minority students and staff, women, and disabled students and staff, and to identify whether its policies help to achieve equality of opportunity for all these groups, or whether they have an adverse impact;
- monitor the recruitment and progress of all students and staff, paying particular attention to the recruitment and progress of ethnic minority students and staff, women, and disabled students and staff;
- promote an inclusive culture, good practice in teaching, learning, and assessment, and good management practice, through the development of codes of best practice, policies, and training;
- take positive action wherever possible to support this policy and its aims; and
- publish this policy widely amongst staff and students, together with policy assessments and results of monitoring

The University will meet all statutory obligations under relevant legislation and, where appropriate, anticipate future legal requirements.

### **Disability and Allowance for Special Circumstances**

Consideration should be given to any special circumstances which may have resulted in a lack of opportunity for any applicant nominee or group of applicants to perform to their full potential, e.g. disability and time away from work because of family responsibilities for bringing up children or caring for relatives or for illness. Initially, the case put forward should be assessed objectively and on the same basis as other applicants nominees before considering whether it would be appropriate to make an allowance. Those making the decision must record whether or not an allowance was made and the reasons behind that decision, as well as indicating the exact nature of any allowance made. Further advice should be sought from the relevant Lead HR Business Partner.

In the case of a member of staff who is known to have a disability, account should be taken of:

- the nature of their disability;



- how they believe it has constrained performance; and
- if appropriate, the effectiveness of any adjustments to their workplace or employment arrangements in overcoming these problems.

Full details of the University's Disability and Employment policy can be found on the web.

### **Confidentiality and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

Members of the Committee and University staff involved in the procedure should note that the process of consideration is confidential and that certain documentation in the guidance cannot be disclosed to anyone who is not a member of the Committee or otherwise appropriately involved in the process.

The University's policy in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is to respect confidentiality of information provided by referees in so far as this is compatible with the requirements of the Regulation and other relevant legislation.

### **The University's Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour**

The University is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming and inclusive community that nurtures a culture in which we treat one another with courtesy and professionalism, even while robustly challenging each other's views and opinions. There is no place for bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or victimisation in our community and each of us is responsible for the way we interact with and treat others.

The University's Dignity at Work Policy and The Code of Behaviour set out the expectations the University has of its employees, and all employees must be familiar with and adhere to them

## **Scheme Adjustments**

The Chair of the Human Resource Committee is authorised, on behalf of the General Board and Council, to make any reasonable change or adjustment to the procedure, interpret any aspects of the guidance mentioned in this document where doubt arises as to its meaning, or take any other action that may be necessary to ensure the fair and efficient management of this and any subsequent exercise.

