

**STANDARD LETTER TO BE USED TO REQUEST REFERENCES**

**NOTE TO FC SECRETARY:**

*Contextual Factors: Annex to Document 2 should not be included in the documentation sent to referees.*

*Private and confidential*

Dear

[Name] in the Faculty/Department of ..... has applied for promotion under the University's annual senior academic promotions scheme to the office of [Professor/Reader/University Senior Lecturer]. Accordingly, I am writing to ask if you would be willing to provide a confidential qualitative assessment of the applicant giving a full and frank appraisal of their suitability for promotion.

The case for promotion is assessed in relation to the criteria for the office, on the basis of the evidence covering the academic's career contained in all the relevant documentation. The guidance on criteria and performance descriptors (bandings) used in the assessment of applications for promotion [to Professorship/Readership/University Senior Lectureship] is attached to this letter.

In so far as you are familiar with the applicant's research, teaching [only for USL applications] and general contribution, it would be helpful if you could address the promotion criteria by giving evidence of the candidate's suitability for promotion to a [Professorship/Readership/University Senior Lectureship], indicating whether they meet the criteria for promotion to the office.

The wording is set out in the five performance descriptors, i.e. 'outstanding evidence' (the highest standard), 'strong evidence', 'clear evidence' (just above the threshold for promotion) etc. Please use these descriptors, as appropriate, in your response.

It is understood that you may not be able to comment across all three criteria (i.e. Research/Scholarship with reference to originality, contribution to the advancement of knowledge and reputation; Teaching; General Contribution); if this is the case, please make this clear in your letter.

It would also be helpful if you were able to comment on the size and importance of the applicant's field, indicating where the applicant stands in comparison with others working in the same field. If you have personal knowledge of [Name] and of their work would you please declare this and specify the nature of this knowledge, for example indicating whether you have had significant collaboration in research and/or acted as their PhD supervisor.

I would be grateful if you would provide evidence, where applicable, of achievement and contribution covering the academic's whole career. Committees would expect to see a rising research trajectory, particularly for promotion to Readerships and Professorships. Please note that work in progress or work completed but not yet published cannot be taken into account as part of the evidence for promotion and your comments therefore should avoid any reference to such work. The University recognises that a research monograph carries particular weight in certain disciplines but it is also aware that the expectation of a monograph can be difficult for applicants who have taken career breaks and/or who have significant caring responsibilities. The University wishes to make it clear that for the purposes of this exercise it is the body of work, not its format that matters.

I enclose for your information a copy of [Name's] application, i.e., curriculum vitae, annexes on research, teaching and general contribution and their personal statement. If the applicant has ticked the interdisciplinary box on Document 2, it would be helpful if you would indicate the areas of their work with which you are most familiar.

I am sure you face increasing demands on your time and acknowledge that this request may be an imposition on you. However, we would greatly value your comments on [Name's] application.

The University will treat your reference securely and in confidence. Confidential references normally are exempt from disclosure to the applicant under the terms of data protection legislation. Despite this, we often receive requests from applicants for copies of their references. By default we will not disclose your reference without checking with you first.

It would be particularly helpful if you were able to reply by [date]. If you have any queries, please contact me at the address above. If for any reason you will not be able to provide a reference, please let me know as soon as possible. Thank you in advance for your response.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the Faculty Committee for the Department of \_\_\_\_\_

*Enclosures:*

- \* Criteria and Performance Descriptors (attached to pro-forma letter)
- \* Curriculum vitae and Annexes (Document 1)
- \* Personal Statement (Document 2)

## CRITERIA AND PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

### *Promotion to a Professorship*

Promotion is determined in terms of the criteria on the basis of the evidence contained in all the relevant documentation.

#### **A. Criteria**

Research/Scholarship: Account may be taken of evidence in relation to research/scholarship regardless of where it has been undertaken.

Teaching: Account may be taken of evidence from previous academic employment in the University and/or College(s) in relation to teaching, but **not** from institutions external to the University.

General Contribution: Evidence of contribution to the applicant's subject other than in teaching and research may include contributions made outside the University.

#### *Research/Scholarship*

There must be established international leadership in the relevant subject with reference to:

- originality
- contribution to the advancement of knowledge
- reputation

#### *Teaching [referees are not expected to assess teaching contribution]*

#### *General Contribution*

There must be an effective contribution to the subject other than in teaching and research. This may include administration and, where appropriate, management of research groups and the creation and management of multi- institutional/national/international research facilities. It may also include contributions, other than teaching and research, to the subject more widely, for example, widening participation activity and the design and delivery of outreach programmes; also editorial work, and clinical work (if applicable).

For a standard general contribution a banding of 'clear' (just above the threshold for promotion) or 'strong' evidence would be appropriate. To justify a higher banding there needs to be evidence of sustained contribution to the faculty/department, University or externally.

#### **B. Performance descriptors (bandings)**

The standards relating to evidence, including performance descriptors shown below indicate the threshold to be attained if promotion to a Professorship is to be achieved.

The number of promotions in any particular year will be determined by the General Board.

#### ***Performance descriptors:***

**Outstanding Evidence**

**Strong Evidence**

**Clear Evidence**

**Insufficient Evidence**

**Clearly Unsatisfactory**

These bandings should be used to summarize the description of achievement in relation to the criteria.

The **lowest two bands** ('Insufficient Evidence' and 'Clearly Unsatisfactory') are deemed to be **below the threshold for promotion**. Any applicant whose contributions fall within these bands for any of the criteria for promotion (research/scholarship, teaching, general contribution) will be deemed not to have met the minimum level for promotion.

## CRITERIA AND PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

### *Promotion to a Readership*

Promotion is determined in terms of the criteria on the basis of the evidence contained in all the relevant documentation.

#### **A. Criteria**

Research/Scholarship: Account may be taken of evidence in relation to research/scholarship regardless of where it has been undertaken.

Teaching: Account may be taken of evidence from previous academic employment in the University and/or College(s) in relation to teaching, but **not** from institutions external to the University.

General Contribution: Evidence of contribution to the applicant's subject other than in teaching and research may include contributions made outside the University.

#### *Research/Scholarship*

There must be international recognition in the relevant subject with reference to:

- originality
- contribution to the advancement of knowledge
- reputation

#### *Teaching [referees are not expected to assess teaching contribution]*

#### *General Contribution*

There must be an effective contribution to the subject other than in teaching and research. This may include administration and, where appropriate, management of research groups and the creation and management of multi-institutional/national/international research facilities. It may also include contributions, other than teaching and research, to the subject more widely, for example, widening participation activity and the design and delivery of outreach programmes; also editorial work, and clinical work (if applicable).

For a standard general contribution a banding of 'clear' (just above the threshold for promotion) or 'strong' evidence would be appropriate. To justify a higher banding there needs to be evidence of sustained contribution to the faculty/department, University or externally.

#### **B. Performance descriptors (bandings)**

The standards relating to evidence, including performance descriptors shown below indicate the threshold to be attained if promotion to a Readership is to be achieved. The number of promotions in any particular year will be determined by the General Board.

#### ***Performance descriptors:***

**Outstanding Evidence**

**Strong Evidence**

**Clear Evidence**

**Insufficient Evidence**

**Clearly Unsatisfactory**

These bandings should be used to summarize the description of achievement in relation to the criteria.

The **lowest two bands** ('Insufficient Evidence' and 'Clearly Unsatisfactory') are deemed to be **below the threshold for promotion**. Any applicant whose contributions fall within these bands for any of the criteria for promotion (research/scholarship, teaching, general contribution) will be deemed not to have met the minimum level for promotion.

## CRITERIA AND PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

### *Promotion to a University Senior Lectureship*

Promotion is determined in terms of the criteria on the basis of the evidence contained in all the relevant documentation.

Applications for promotion to University Senior Lecturer are considered against the criteria specified when this grade was created, namely:

*“To reward sustained excellence in teaching, sustained supportiveness in administration and organisational tasks, and achievement in research”*

This is reflected by a capped banding of ‘Clear Evidence’ for the research/scholarship criterion for this office.

These aspects are set out in more detail below for each of the assessment criteria

#### **A. Criteria**

Research/Scholarship: Account may be taken of evidence in relation to research/scholarship regardless of where it has been undertaken.

Teaching: Account may be taken of evidence from previous academic employment in the University and/or College(s) in relation to teaching, but **not** from institutions external to the University.

General Contribution: Evidence of contribution to the applicant’s subject other than in teaching and research may include contributions made outside the University.

##### *Research/Scholarship*

There must be achievement in research/scholarship that allows the Faculty or Department to count the applicant as research-active.

##### *Teaching*

There must be sustained excellence in teaching with reference to: course development and innovation; and the delivery of teaching including, as appropriate, lecturing, conducting seminars, supervising undergraduate and graduate students, and directing studies (if applicable). ‘Sustained excellence in teaching’ may be interpreted as consistently excellent performance across a range of teaching and teaching-related activity. Account may be taken of evidence from previous academic employment in the University and/or College(s) in relation to teaching, but **not** from institutions external to the University.

If a teaching officer is doing a standard amount of teaching, for example lectures, exams and demonstrations, in a satisfactory way a banding of ‘clear’ or ‘strong’ evidence would be appropriate. To justify a higher banding there needs to be evidence of exceptional teaching contribution or involvement in course design.

##### *General Contribution*

There must be an effective contribution to the subject other than in teaching and research. This may include administration and, where appropriate, management of research groups and the creation and management of multi- institutional/national/international research facilities. It may also include contributions, other than teaching and research, to the subject more widely, for example, widening participation activity and the design and delivery of outreach programmes; also editorial work, and clinical work (if applicable).

For a standard general contribution a banding of ‘clear’ or ‘strong’ evidence would be appropriate. To justify a higher banding there needs to be evidence of sustained contribution to the faculty/department, University or externally.

## **B. Performance descriptors (bandings)**

The standards relating to evidence explained below indicate the minimum threshold to be attained if promotion to a University Senior Lectureship is to be achieved. The number of promotions in any particular year will be determined by the General Board.

***Performance descriptors:***

**Outstanding Evidence**

**Strong Evidence**

**Clear Evidence\***

**Insufficient Evidence**

**Clearly Unsatisfactory**

\* Just above the threshold for promotion

These bandings should be used to summarize the description of achievement in relation to the criteria. For the research/scholarship criterion, the banding is capped at 'Clear Evidence' for promotion to this office. For teaching and general contribution criteria, the full range of banding can be used to summarise the assessment of achievement.

The **lowest two bands** ('Insufficient Evidence' and 'Clearly Unsatisfactory') are deemed to be **below the threshold for promotion**. Any applicant whose contributions fall within these bands for any of the criteria for promotion (research/scholarship, teaching, general contribution) will be deemed not to have met the minimum level for promotion.