

Senior Researcher Promotions: 2020 exercise

Key principles and guidance to be observed throughout the procedure

Please note that changes made to this Appendix last year to align it with the Senior Academic Promotions guidance (Section 2), incorporating proposals in the Report to the General Board on arrangements for Senior Academic Promotions¹ (published in the Reporter on 10 May 2018 and subsequently approved) have been carried forward to this year's exercise.

1. Key Principles

1.1 The following Key Principles apply:

- (a) The University of Cambridge is committed, in its pursuit of academic excellence, to equality of opportunity and to a proactive approach that supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity.
- (b) All persons involved in administering the senior researcher promotions processes should exercise impartiality and fairness and be seen to do so. Declarations of interest should be made at appropriate stages. Appropriate training should be completed.
- (c) Members of committees should ensure that their consideration is collective, fair, impartial and evidence-based.
- (d) The University should provide a supportive career development process and research staff should participate.
- (e) All processes should be organized in a timely and transparent way.
- (f) Constructive, helpful, developmental feedback should be provided at all appropriate stages.
- (g) All applications and documentation should be treated as confidential and in accordance with data protection principles.

2. Fairness and Declaration of Interest

- 2.1 All persons involved in the procedure and in the consideration of applications should be fully conversant with the senior researcher promotions guidance. 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.
- 2.2 Any person involved in the preparation, presentation of documentation or in the consideration of applications who has a personal interest that may affect the impartial consideration of applications should declare this to the appropriate person. The appropriate person will be the Chair of the relevant Committee or the Head of Institution, as appropriate. If the Chair of the Committee or the Head of Institution has such an interest, they should declare it and discuss it with the relevant Chair of the Council of the School, or some other person as advised by the relevant HR Business Manager.
- 2.3 If it is considered that it would be inappropriate for a person who has declared an interest to participate in the evaluation of an application that person should take no further part in

¹ Please see <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2017-18/weekly/6505/section8.shtml>

the process. The criteria to be used in making such judgments is not just whether the member should be able to set aside any personal differences with an applicant or preference for an applicant, but rather whether, given the circumstances, a 'bystander' would have real doubt as to whether the member could act in a way that is wholly free from bias.

3. Equal Opportunity

3.1 No member of staff will be treated less favourably than another because they belong to a protected group. Protected characteristics are: Sex, Gender Reassignment, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Pregnancy or Maternity, Race (including Ethnic or National Origin, Nationality or Colour), Disability, Sexual Orientation, Age, or Religion or Belief.

3.2 The University's Equal Opportunity policy must be observed at all times. The policy is set out at:
<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/2012/chapter01-section13.html>

All staff who serve on committees or are otherwise involved in administering the senior researcher promotions scheme should ensure that they have read this policy and have completed the online E&D training module.

Under-representation in senior positions and unconscious bias

3.3 The University is concerned by the underrepresentation of women, Black and Minority Ethnic and disabled staff in senior positions. It also takes seriously the increasing body of evidence suggesting an impact of unconscious bias on the assessment of candidates for promotion and progression. The impact of bias can potentially negatively affect the recruitment, retention and progression of underrepresented staff members at all levels of career progression.

The following practical steps should be taken to bring equality and diversity and the risk of unconscious bias to the forefront of decision making within the senior researcher promotions scheme:

Committees

3.4 The gender balance of the promotions committee should be as close to 50% male and 50% female as reasonably possible and should normally include a minimum of two members of each gender. Consideration should also be given to the racial and ethnic diversity of the committees.

3.5 The Chair of each Committee should initiate and facilitate a discussion on unconscious bias at the outset of any meeting.

Heads of Institution

3.6 Heads of Institution should:

- have supportive conversations with all staff eligible to apply for senior promotions
- actively seek underrepresented staff who are potentially ready for promotion and encourage them to apply
- support underrepresented staff to find a mentor
- discuss promotion pathways with underrepresented staff not yet ready for promotion.

Allowance for contextual factors

- 3.7 The quality and impact of an applicant's performance should be assessed objectively and on the same basis as other applicants.
- 3.8 It is also important, however, to understand and address contextual factors by making appropriate equality-related adjustments to allow for a fair promotions process where those who have faced these additional barriers will be considered on an even footing. Promotions committees should take into account that not all careers follow a standard and uninterrupted route. All metrics should be considered in context with other factors to ensure that a balanced view is taken of the individual's overall contribution to research or administration.

Contextual factors may include, but are not limited to:

- Part time working
 - Ill health or injury
 - Disability
 - Caring responsibilities
 - Periods of leave or unavailability including those related to maternity or parental leave
 - Bereavement leave
- 3.9 In the case of a member of staff who is known to have a disability, account should be taken of:
- i) the nature of their disability;
 - ii) how they believe it has constrained performance;
 - iii) and, if appropriate, the effectiveness of any adjustments to their workplace or employment arrangements in overcoming these problems.
- 3.10 In the case of a member of staff who has taken leave from their usual duties, e.g. maternity or sick leave, assessment of their contribution should focus on the period when they were at work, with allowance made for quantity of work/output, as appropriate, on their return to work.
- 3.11 It is important to note and agree that equality-related adjustments do not allow committees to lower the bar when assessing excellence.

For example, any reduction in working time of the candidate due to contextual factors should be taken into account when judging the quality of their work or output. One way of making an appropriate adjustment would be to consider the impact of the issue on the quantity of activity undertaken. In these circumstances committees would still require the candidate to demonstrate the same standard (quality) as other candidates in terms of the excellence of their contribution. However, the quantity of research output would be adjusted.

Advice about adjustments should be sought at the earliest opportunity from the relevant HR Business Manager in order that any relevant support may be provided.

Confidentiality and data protection legislation

- 3.12 Members of the Committees and University staff involved in the procedure should note that the process of consideration is confidential and that certain documentation in the guidance may not be disclosed to applicants or other persons who are not members of Committees or otherwise appropriately involved in the process.

- 3.13 The University's policy in relation to data protection legislation requires that confidentiality of information provided by referees including information contained in written assessments by Heads of Institutions is respected insofar as this is compatible with the requirements of that legislation. Please see Document SRP5.

Procedural Adjustments and Interpretation of Guidance

- 3.14 The Chair of the Human Resources Committee is authorised, on behalf of the General Board and Council, to make any reasonable change or adjustment to the senior researcher promotions procedure, interpret any aspects of the written promotions guidance 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.