

SENIOR RESEARCHER PROMOTIONS SCHEME GUIDANCE 2025 EXERCISE

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the procedure for promotion to **Principal Research Associate (PRA)** at Grade 11 and **Director of Research (DoR)** at Grade 12.

Research staff may be considered under the Academic Career Pathways (ACP) scheme for academics involved in research and teaching only if funding can be identified from non-UEF sources in order to establish a single tenure Professorship (Grade 12) or a Professorship (Grade 11). The route set out in this guidance is therefore the normal promotion route for senior research staff where there is a clear and continuing institutional requirement and funding available to hold a position at a level equivalent to Professor (Grade 11) or Professor (Grade 12). The threshold standards applied will be broadly consistent with those expected in the established ACP process.

This year's process commences in Michaelmas Term 2024, for promotions that are effective from 1 October 2025. The procedure was introduced in 2013, to standardise the different processes for the consideration of senior researcher promotions that were in operation across the University. Existing local procedures should continue to be followed for promotion to Senior Research Associate (SRA).

Promotion to PRA and DoR should be regarded as exceptional and those assessing applications will consider the following:

- Assessment against the evaluative criteria for the role, covering the applicant's research and general contribution
- Confirmation that funding is available to support the higher salary costs and associated on-costs should the applicant be promoted,
- Articulation of the business case for the promotion and confirmation that there is a clear and continuing institutional requirement for the role.

An application will only be approved if:

- the promotion to a senior level would meet the strategic needs of the institution, and
- there is sufficient grant funding for the post for the full duration of the appointment; this will normally be from the existing grant(s) that are supporting the applicant's contract of employment.

The applicant must send their application to the relevant secretary of the Faculty Committee, who will pass applications to the relevant Head of Institution to provide a written recommendation. After consideration by the Faculty Committee, applications will be sent to the relevant School Committee for consideration (para 4.5). Applications which are unable to demonstrate both funding and strategic need will not be supported even if the applicant is able to demonstrate that their personal contribution meets the required level against the evaluative criteria.

The process outlined in Section 4 of this document refers to the committees which will assess applications made under the SRP scheme. Membership of the Faculty Committees and School Committees referred to in this document will be the same as the committees which will assess applications made under the Academic Career Pathways schemes. However, this is in the interests of efficiency only and the two processes are separate.

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY

On launching the annual scheme, lists of eligible employees will be provided to Institutions via the burst report mechanism. Burst report recipients must share the eligibility lists with the Head of Institution. All eligible researchers considering making an application must discuss this in advance with their Head of Institution or nominated deputy.

Individuals who hold the positions of Senior Research Associate are eligible to apply for promotion to Principal Research Associate, and those holding the position of Principal Research Associate are eligible to apply for promotion to Director of Research. In very exceptional circumstances, a Research Associate could apply for promotion under the scheme; however, this needs to be with the prior agreement of the relevant Head of Institution. Staff in non-researcher roles and those staff in roles more junior than Research Associate are not eligible under the scheme.

Applications for promotion that are approved in a particular year are at the discretion of the Senior Researcher Promotions Committees and ultimately the Chair of the Human Resources Committee. The Key Principles set out in Appendix 1 of this procedure, and the paragraphs covering fairness and declaration of interest, equal opportunity, allowance for additional considerations and confidentiality apply.

SECTION 3: EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Nominations for promotion to Principal Research Associate and Director of Research will be considered on the basis of:

- Research/Scholarship
- General Contribution

Evidence must be submitted to demonstrate a significant and sustained contribution in both areas.

SECTION 3.1: EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR APPLICATIONS TO PRINCIPAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

Research/Scholarship

The applicant must clearly demonstrate that they are recognised at an international level for the advancement of their area of research and that their current potential will lead to continued achievement in research. This will be judged by reference to:

- International reputation and peer recognition
- Innovativeness and originality of research
- Contribution to the advancement of knowledge
- Strategy for maintenance and development of future research
- Successful collaboration with other research teams/institutes
- Established record of securing external research funding

General Contribution

The applicant must clearly demonstrate a wider contribution to their institution or team other than in research, to the University and, where appropriate, to external individuals and organisations. This may include (but is not limited to):



- Contribution to management or administrative tasks/duties that enable the achievement of the University's and/or Institution's wider goals and aims.
- Contribution to the development of the research base through activities that develop early career researchers e.g. PhD and Post Doctoral research training and/or supervision, mentoring etc.
- Activities that contribute to knowledge transfer and engagement with broader communities including business, the public sector and the wider society e.g. through informing public policy, consultancy, intellectual property, commercialisation activities, public outreach activities etc.
- Effective management of a research group(s) that maximise the contribution of the individuals within the group and the group as a whole.
- Clinical duties, participation in regional and national medical education or veterinary education committees and other bodies concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate medical and veterinary education.
- Teaching duties for a college or colleges.

SECTION 3.2: EVALUATIVE CRITERIA FOR APPLICATIONS TO DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

Research/Scholarship

The applicant must clearly demonstrate that they are a recognised leader in the advancement of their subject in the international field and that they will continue to do so. This will be judged by reference to;

- International reputation and peer recognition
- Innovativeness and originality of research
- Leadership of, and seminal contribution to, the advancement of knowledge
- Strategy for maintenance and development of future research
- Leadership of successful and impactful collaborations with other research teams/institutions where appropriate
- Exceptional record of gaining external research funding

General Contribution

The applicant must clearly demonstrate a wider contribution to their institution or team other than in research, to the University and, where appropriate, to external individuals and organisations. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Contribution to management, leadership or administrative tasks/duties that enable achievement of the University's and/or Institute's wider goals and aims.
- Significant contribution to the development of the research base through activities that develop early career researchers e.g. PhD and Post Doctoral research training and/or supervision, mentoring etc.
- Activities that contribute to knowledge transfer and engagement with broader communities including business, the public sector and the wider society e.g. through informing public policy, consultancy, intellectual property, commercialisation activities, public outreach activities etc.).
- Effective management of a research group(s) that maximises the contribution of the individuals within the group and the group as a whole.
- Clinical duties, participation in regional and national medical and veterinary medical education committees and other bodies concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate medical and veterinary education.
- Teaching duties for a college or colleges.

SECTION 4: DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESS

Step 1: At the start of the process, in September 2024, Heads of Institution will receive a copy of this procedure and lists of eligible employees will be provided to Institutions via the burst report mechanism. Heads of Institutions should refer all eligible employees to the launch letter and this procedure document.

Step 2: Eligible employees considering making an application should meet with their Head of Institution or nominated deputy. In this meeting, it may be useful to discuss the contribution of the individual relative to the evaluative criteria, whether there is sufficient funding to cover the increased costs of promotion and whether the Head of Institution would consider the promotion to be in line with the strategic objectives of the Institution.

Step 3: If, following this discussion, the individual decides to submit an application, they must complete the relevant application form (SRP1) and supply the following documents:

- a CV
- a personal statement, setting out their evidence for how they meet the relevant evaluative criteria (within SRP1)
- the names, title and contact details for two referees, at least one of whom should be external to the University (within SRP1).

Please note, applicants are expected to apply the principles of the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA). More information on DORA can be viewed [here](#).

Step 4: Applications should be submitted to the Secretary of the relevant Faculty Committee (FC) by 9 October 2024. No application or additional information relating to the application will be accepted after the deadline. Applicants should be aware that if their application does not conform to the guidelines, it may be returned to them for necessary revision and re-submission no later than the deadline.

Step 5: The Secretary of the FC will pass the application to the relevant Head of Institution who will nominate a further three references (form SRP2). The FC Secretary will request the referees (using the template text in form SRP3) to complete form SRP4. Completed references will be forwarded to the Head of Institution, who will make an evaluation of the applicant against the evaluative criteria (research and general contribution), funding and strategic need. The Head of Institution will provide a written recommendation to the relevant FC. The recommendation should comment on the strength of the case for promotion to the position specified by the applicant in terms of the criteria for that position as set out in the guidance (see section 3) based on the knowledge of the applicant's contribution and achievement in relation to research/scholarship (with reference to originality, contribution to the advancement of knowledge, reputation and impact) and general contribution, including evidence of excellence in these areas. The recommendation should also address the availability of funding for the promotion and confirmation that the promotion is in line with the strategic objectives of the Institution.

Step 6: The relevant FC will consider the application and supporting documentation and determine their recommendations for forwarding to the School Committee (SC). Assessments of applications must be recorded using the Assessment Record template.

Step 7: All applications, references, and completed Assessment Records must be sent to the ACP Team by 14 February 2025 for preparation in advance of the SC. The SC will consider all the applications from that School, and will determine their recommendations on each application. The SC must note their assessment of applications on the Assessment Record for each applicant. The SC must also prepare feedback statements for applicants they do not recommend for promotion. The purpose of the feedback is to provide an unsuccessful applicant with a clear sense of what they would need to do in order to raise the level of their achievement to the standard required to obtain promotion in a future exercise. Feedback statements must therefore provide clear information on the areas in which

improvements are required, referring to the relevant Evaluative Criteria, and provide practical advice on how the applicant might achieve these improvements. For example, they may suggest examples of general contribution that they would expect to see from someone at the level for which the applicant has applied.

Step 8: Following their meetings, the recommendations from the SC will be collated and submitted to the Chair of the Human Resources Committee for review. They will review the correct application of the procedure in the different areas and ensure consistency in the standards applied. They will make the final decision on whether a promotion application should be supported.

Step 9: Applicants, the relevant Heads of Institution, and Chairs and Secretaries of School and Faculty Committees will be notified in writing of the outcome of the process. Unsuccessful applicants can seek feedback from the Head of Institution

Step 10: Successful promotions will take effect from 1 October in the year following the application date.

SECTION 5: FEEDBACK

The purpose of feedback is to provide an unsuccessful applicant with a clear sense of what they would need to do in order to raise the level of their achievement to the standard required to obtain promotion in a future exercise. Every attempt should be made to provide feedback that is helpful and constructive.

Heads of Institution will be informed of the outcomes of applications in their institution. Details of the feedback process will be provided to those with unsuccessful applicants in their institution.

Unsuccessful applicants must be offered the following as part of the feedback process:

- **Written feedback:** a copy of the feedback statement prepared by the relevant SC for the applicant. Applicants must also be informed that they can also request a copy of their Assessment Record completed by the FC and SC, along with a copy of the Institutional Statement, and copies of References where referees have agreed to the release in line with data protection legislation. Applicants can request this by contacting the ACP Team (acp@admin.cam.ac.uk)
- **Verbal feedback (feedback meeting):** a meeting in person, so that the Head of Institution can provide constructive, verbal feedback. Please see below for guidance on how to prepare for these meetings.

Note: there may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for someone other than the Head of Institution to provide feedback to an unsuccessful applicant, for example the Head of School, or a senior colleague who previously provided mentoring or other support to the applicant.

Prior to the feedback meeting

In order to prepare for a feedback meeting, Heads of Institution must meet with the relevant Chairs of the FC and SC, to discuss the reasons for unsuccessful applications. Heads of Institution may also wish to discuss the feedback with the Head of School, prior to meeting with the unsuccessful applicant.

All parties are asked to be mindful of the sensitivities involved in providing feedback and to allow reasonable time for the feedback process to enable the applicants concerned to fully consider the information provided.

SECTION 6: APPEALS

Applicants have the right of appeal against the outcome of an application for promotion. Appeals must be made in writing to the Director of Human Resources by 18 July 2025.



Appeals will be considered by the Director of Human Resources and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. They will consider the grounds on which the applicant has appealed, and gather additional information from those involved in the assessment of the application as necessary. Once they have considered the relevant information, they will determine the appeal by doing one of the following:

- a) Uphold the appeal on one or more of the grounds on which the appeal was made, and stating that, in their view, the grounds on which the appeal has been upheld might have made a difference to the decision of the Chair of the HR Committee, referring the appellant's application for promotion back to the Chair of the HR Committee for reconsideration.
- b) Uphold the appeal on one or more of the grounds on which the appeal was made, but stating that, in their view, the grounds on which the appeal has been upheld would have made no material difference to the decision of the Chair of the HR Committee, nevertheless, referring the appellant's application for promotion back to the Chair of the HR Committee for reconsideration.
- c) Reject the appeal on all grounds.
- d) Strike out an appeal on the grounds that it is frivolous, vexatious, or otherwise an abuse of process.

SECTION 6: INDICATIVE TIMETABLE FOR THE 2025 EXERCISE

Deadline for submission of applications from applicants	9 October 2024
Meetings of the Faculty Committees	By 31 January 2025
Submission of complete and checked documentation for all applicants to the ACP mailbox	By 14 February 2025
Meetings of the School Committee	By 14 March 2025
Recommendations to the Chair of the Human Resources Committee	By end of May 2025
Final date for feedback to unsuccessful applicants	4 July 2025
Deadline for lodging of appeals to the Director of Human Resources	By 18 July 2025