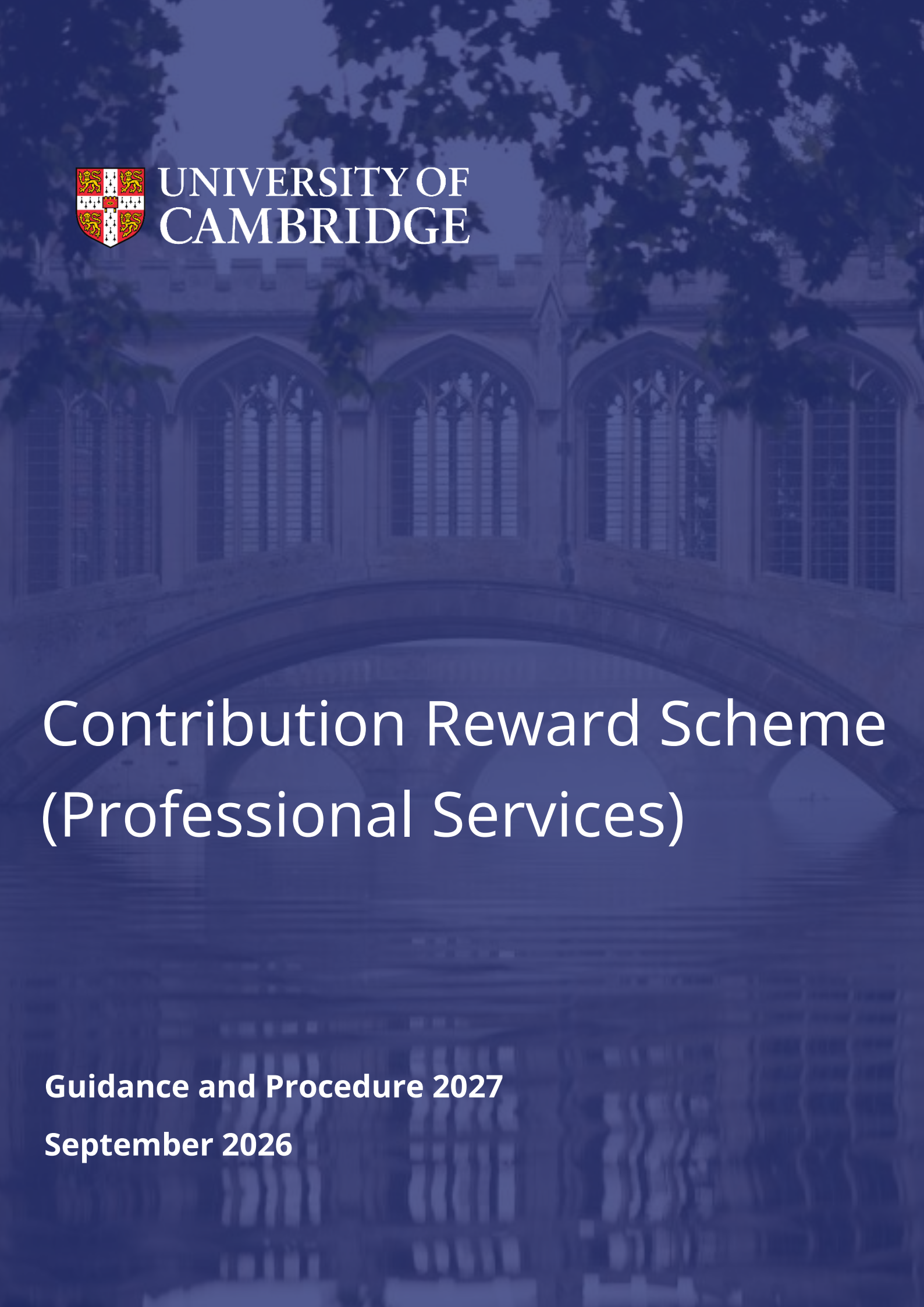

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Contribution Reward Scheme (Professional Services)

Guidance and Procedure 2027

September 2026

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1. 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.

Further information relating to scheme eligibility can be found on page 6.

It is normally expected that nominations for an award under this scheme will be submitted by the eligible employee's line manager. Eligible employees can also nominate themselves for an award, and are encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss their intention to nominate themselves with their line manager. Further details relating to self-nominations can be found on page 12.

Nominations will be assessed in two stages. Firstly, at an **institutional** level by the Head of Institution, before final assessment is made by the **Awarding Authority** of the School or Non-School Institution to which the nominee belongs.

There is no right of appeal against an unsuccessful application.

All those involved in the scheme, either as a prospective nominee, line manager, Head of Institution or Awarding Authority member are expected to read and be familiar with this guidance.

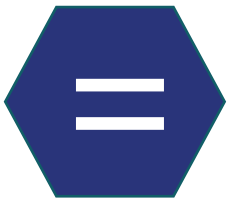
A scheme timetable can be found in the Annex on page 16.

Important Note

Contribution 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.

2. Key Principles



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.

All persons involved in administering the scheme 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.

Appropriate **budgetary provision** should be made so that deserving nominees receive appropriate recognition and reward.

Members of institutions and Awarding Authorities should ensure that their consideration is collective, fair, impartial and evidence-based.

All nominations and documentation should be treated as **confidential** and in accordance with data protection principles.

All processes should be organised in a **timely and transparent** way.

Constructive, helpful, developmental **feedback** should be provided at all appropriate stages including written feedback.

All processes should be supported by modern and user-friendly **systems** to ensure administrative efficiency, fairness, and equality.

Equal Opportunities

No employee 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.

The University's Equal Opportunity policy must be observed at all times.

All employees who serve on Awarding Authorities or are involved in administering the scheme must have read this policy and have completed the online Equality & Diversity (E&D) training module (see Key Principles).

Eligible employees who are on long term absence from work should not be placed at a disadvantage due to their absence. Assessments regarding a nomination should be based on their contribution whilst at work.

The outcomes of the scheme will be monitored on an annual basis and the results shared with key stakeholders, including the recognised trade unions. However, where the data poses a risk of identifying individuals, either directly or indirectly, it will not be shared.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the scheme has been undertaken in accordance with the University's obligations under the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. A further EIA will be undertaken in the event of any substantive changes to the scheme.

Confidentiality and Data Protection Legislation

Members of institutions, Awarding Authorities and other University staff involved should note that the process of consideration is strictly confidential, and that certain documentation must not be disclosed to nominees or other persons who are not members of Awarding Authorities or otherwise appropriately involved in the process. This does not restrict an employee's right of access to their own personal data under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, nor any relevant pay disclosure protected under section 77 of the Equality Act 2010.

The University's policy in relation to data protection legislation (the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018) requires that confidentiality of information provided by Heads of Institutions is respected insofar as this is compatible with that legislation.

The University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

In fulfilling its remit, and mindful of the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and the need to have particular regard for the importance of free speech and academic freedom within the law. Institutions and Awarding Authorities will consider and note any concerns about free speech or academic freedom that have arisen or might reasonably arise, including reasons why the process did not penalise an applicant for their exercise of free speech or academic freedom.

3. Eligibility

Eligibility for an award under the scheme will depend on what award the employee is being nominated for:

Contribution increment

To be eligible for an award, employees must:

- be an Academic-Related or Assistant employee in grades 2[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.

Employees who have transferred to the University under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE) and have not harmonised to the University's terms and conditions will follow the progression applicable to the employer from which they have transferred. Therefore, the previous employer should be consulted on any schemes for recognising outstanding contribution.

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

Further guidance in relation to contribution increment nominations can be found in section 4.

Important Note

For employees in receipt of Market Pay, any increase to base salary will erode the value of the Market Pay by an amount equal to the increase in base pay

[1] Please note: Grade 1 employees are not eligible for contribution increment awards due to all Grade 1 employees being at the top contribution point of the 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.

Employees who have transferred to the University under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE) and have not harmonised to the University's terms and conditions will follow the progression applicable to the employer from which they have transferred. Therefore, the previous employer should be consulted on any schemes for recognising outstanding contribution. Please note that any nominees who do not meet any of the above criteria will not receive an award under this scheme.

Further guidance in relation to contribution increment nominations can be found in section 5.

Important Note

Eligible employees can only be nominated for either a contribution increment or a single contribution payment, not both.

4. Contribution Increment Awards

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, on an annual basis. If, however, the resulting salary results in the employee moving to one of the contribution points (i.e. starred points) for the grade, this will end automatic progression up the grade. More information on the University salary scales can be found here.

While increases in salary may positively impact an employee's future pension benefits, large increases can have personal tax implications. Further guidance can be found in the Pensions Tax section on Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)'s website: www.uss.co.uk. For further information (or if you are a member of a different employer pension scheme), employees can also contact the University Pensions Office at: pensionsonline@admin.cam.ac.uk.

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

Role of the line manager in preparing a Nomination for a Contribution Increment Award

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 (the twelve months preceding the 1 October of the year the scheme is launched). They should ensure that nominations are made fairly and equitably.

When assessing eligible team members for contribution increments, 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.

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 - Contribution Increment/s

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

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

When nominating an employee for a contribution increment, line mangers 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 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 responsibility 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).

5. Single Contribution Payments

Single contribution payments are 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.

Role of the line manager in preparing a nomination for a single payment contribution award

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 (the twelve months preceding the 1 October of the year the scheme is launched). They should ensure that nominations are made fairly and equitably.

When assessing eligible team members for 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?
- Where the employee is at the top of the grade the line manager should consider the time since the employee last received a contribution award (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.

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 – Single Contribution Payments

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

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.

6. Self-Nominations

Eligible employees may also nominate themselves for an award and are encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss their intention to do so with their line manager.

The purpose of this discussion is for the employee and line manager to have a meaningful and balanced discussion about the employee's achievements over the last year. This discussion should help the employee to fully consider whether to submit a nomination and if the nomination is likely to be supported by the line manager in the first instance.

Employees can use the resources available on the University's SRD pages to prepare and support these initial conversations with their line manager. Resources to support line managers with these initial conversations can be found on the University's Performance and Development pages.

Employees intending to submit a self-nomination are referred to pages 6-12 of this guidance for further information on the types of awards.

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.

7. 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).

8. Feedback

Feedback is an important part of the process and helps employees to gain a clearer sense of why their nomination was unsuccessful and what they would need to do to improve their prospects in future exercises.

The Awarding Authority will provide feedback to institutions on any unsuccessful nominations. It is then for the institutions to ensure that feedback is shared with the nominees, which would normally be via the line manager. Line managers are encouraged to meet with their employees to discuss feedback and offer support, where required.

Resources to support line managers with providing feedback can be found on the University's Building a feedback culture SharePoint page.

If the institution is unclear on why a nomination was unsuccessful, they should seek clarity from the relevant Awarding Authority.

9. 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.

In circumstances where external market influences are the main factor relating to the retention of an employee, Market Pay may be a more appropriate option to consider. Out of cycle awards should not be used in place of Market Pay where this is the more appropriate option.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. Annex: Scheme Timetable

Launch	Indicative Dates
• The scheme is launched by email from the Director of Human Resources to Awarding Authorities. • Awarding Authorities set deadlines for institutions to return submissions and inform institutions. • Institutions set deadlines for nominations/self-nominations to be returned and contact eligible employees to confirm the scheme has launched.	Early October 2026
Nominations Window	
• Nominations for eligible employees submitted by completing form PD30a. • Completed nominations should be submitted per institutional instructions.	By the deadline set by the institution
Institutional Review of Nominations	
• Institutions should complete section D of the nomination forms, confirming whether the case is supported. • 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.	By the deadline set by the Awarding Authority
Awarding Authority Review of Nominations	
• Awarding Authority to contact HR Reward Team to request institutional spreadsheets to be merged ahead of Awarding Authority meeting. • Awarding Authorities will review and consider all nominations. • Awarding Authorities will record the final outcomes and submit them to the HR Reward Team. • 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.	22 February 2027
Outcomes	

• Once all queries are resolved, the HR Reward Team will draft the outcome letters and inform institutions that letters can be issued to applicants. • Payments are processed by the HR Amendments Team and Payroll and are made in the April payroll. • 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).	April 2027

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