



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Academic Career Pathways 2024 (Research & Teaching)

Committee Guidance
2023-2024

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Other Available Guidance

Committee members are also encouraged to review the following guidance documents:

- **General Information (Applicable to all)**
- **Assessment and Scoring**

Overview

All the pathways within the ACP R&T scheme operate under a three-stage Committee process:

1. Faculty Committee (FC)
2. School Committee (SC)
3. Vice-Chancellor's Committee (VCC)

The list of the FCs and SCs is below:

| School Committee | Faculty Committees |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Arts and Humanities | Combined Faculty Committee One: Architecture and History of Art, English, Music, Philosophy and Divinity |
| | Combined Faculty Committee Two: Classics, Modern and Medieval Languages and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies |
| Biological Sciences | Biology and Veterinary Medicine |
| Clinical Medicine | Clinical Medicine |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | Economics |
| | Education |
| | History |
| | Human, Social, and Political Sciences and the Department of History and Philosophy of Science |
| | Law, Land Economy and Criminology |
| Physical Sciences | Earth Sciences and Geography |
| | Mathematics |
| | Physics and Chemistry |
| Technology | Business and Management |
| | Computer Science and Technology |
| | Engineering and Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology |

Committees Roles and Responsibilities

| Faculty Committee (FC) | School Committee (SC) | Vice-Chancellor's Committee (VCC) |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises the Chair and Secretary (by circulation) in deciding actions to take before the meeting, including nominating referees. • Reviews applications, ensuring there is a complete set of documentation for each applicant. • Considers each application at the meeting, evaluating, banding, and scoring the candidate's Research contribution objectively against the evaluative criteria and recording collective decisions against the Assessment Criteria, using the full range of scores in order to indicate the relative strength of each application. • Makes an indicative assessment of the candidate's Teaching/Researcher Development and Service to the University and the academic community. • Decides whether each case meets the criteria across the three areas: Research, Teaching/Researcher Development and Service, in accordance with the Assessment Criteria, confirming its assessment to the SC. • Provides recommendations to the SC, placing applications for each academic office in a ranked list of priority. • Advises the respective Lead HR Business Partner (as Secretary of the relevant SC) that documentation is complete and can be provided to the SC via the online portal. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews the Research and research leadership evaluation and score for each candidate from the FCs, making changes it believes are necessary to ensure that they have been applied consistently between candidates and across FCs. • Assesses and scores each candidate against the Teaching/Researcher Development and Service to the University and the academic community criteria, taking account of the indicative evaluation and recommendations of the FC. • Records all decisions made against the relevant Assessment Criteria and School/Institution-specific Indicators of Excellence. • Decides which applicants meet the required standard of excellence and should receive promotion/progression, producing a rank order of total scores for each academic office. • Agrees a Feedback statement for each applicant to be provided at their feedback meeting with their Head of Institution. • Advises the Secretary of the VCC that documentation is complete and can be provided to the VCC via the online portal. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderates between the School Committees to ensure that a consistent standard has been achieved. The VCC receives the rank order of candidates for each academic office and considers the documentary evidence for applicants, deciding whether any adjustments in evaluation are necessary. • Identifies any particular case(s) where the SC reached a different conclusion from the FC and any cases in which non-standard aspects have caused difficulty. • Make recommendations to the General Board concerning applicants that should receive promotion/progression for each academic office. The General Board receives these recommendations, confirms the outcomes of Associate Professor (Grade 10) applications and provides a Report to the University recommending the establishment of Professorships (Grades 11 and 12) and Clinical Professorships, for its approval. |

Committee Membership

- For each annual ACP R&T round, Faculty Boards will review and nominate the membership of their FC and seek approval from the relevant Council of the School. The FC Chair will be nominated from among those members.
- Each School has a SC, the membership of which will be approved by the relevant Council of the School and will include the Head of School. The Council of each School will also nominate a Chair from an institution independent of that School and a member external to the University, who will be a distinguished academic, for appointment by the GB.
- The membership of both the FCs and SCs should comprise:
 - a minimum of five members and normally not more than nine members, who will be normally be at professorial level and will be chosen to cover the range of disciplines covered by the committee; and
 - a professorial member of staff in an appropriate subject area who is independent of the institutions covered by that committee.
- Members of the FC and SC will normally serve for a three-year term and no member may serve for more than two consecutive terms of three years (i.e., members may serve on a committee for a maximum of six years)
- The full membership of the promotions committees will be published in the Reporter in the Michaelmas Term.
- VCC membership comprises: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair), the Chair and external member of each SC and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for staff. Other attendees at the meeting include the Director of Human Resources (Secretary) and the Academic Secretary (Secretary of the GB).
- Committee members must be Professors (Grade 12) or of professorial standing¹.
- There is no age disqualification for membership.
- The gender balance of each Committee should be as close to 50% men and 50% women as reasonably possible and should normally include a minimum of two members of each gender. Consideration should be given to the racial and ethnic diversity of the committees. The Secretary of each School Committee should check with each external member how they wish their gender and race to be described. A report will be provided centrally of the gender, race and ethnic origin of Committee members.
- University members of promotions committees are expected to undertake relevant training in equality and diversity matters as specified by the Human Resources Division on behalf of the General Board.

¹ Exceptionally, permission may be given in certain circumstances for non-professorial members to be appointed. If this is considered necessary, advice should be sought from the relevant [HR Schools Team](#).



- All members of promotions committees are responsible for ensuring that the assessment of applications is conducted fairly and transparently and complies with the Scheme's Key Principles. Any member can challenge the process at any time if they consider that this is not the case by raising this with Chair of the relevant Committee.
- Meetings should be arranged so that, if possible, all members can attend. The quorum for all Committees is two-thirds of the membership, subject to a minimum of four members. Decisions should be made with the concurrence of the majority of members attending the meeting.
- Meetings may be held in person or via a videoconferencing platform.
- All members should be aware that:
 - i. a systematic approach in forming a view of an application is desirable;
 - ii. the process of evaluation is a collective activity with all decisions made collectively.
 - iii. If a member is unable to be present at the meeting, they may provide a written statement of their assessment of the applications. However, as written views cannot be challenged by other members, they should be accorded less weight than those openly discussed in the meeting.
 - iv. 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.
- Members who are on sabbatical leave must seek permission to attend meetings held during their period of leave through the relevant HR Schools Team.
- There should be no overlap in the membership of these committees in any exercise. Therefore, it is recommended that the SC membership is determined before that of the FC.

Overarching Considerations



Each application will be considered and assessed on its own merit against the Assessment Criteria for the level in question, taking into equal account evidence of both inputs and outputs. The generic Indicators of Excellence as well as the respective School/Institution-specific Indicators of Excellence provide examples of evidence of fulfilment of these criteria. Assessment against the criteria requires the exercise of good judgement, balance and objective evidence.



Each Committee should be mindful of the existence of unconscious biases – both in themselves and others - and consider how these biases might affect how assessments are made and how they affect objective decision-making. Committee members should constructively challenge any potential implicit or explicit biases they observe in the assessment process, whether in themselves or others, to ensure fairness and promote inclusion.



Whilst it is important to ensure a fair and consistent approach is taken to evaluating excellence, the University recognises that certain metrics, such as student feedback and bibliometrics, have their limitations. Committees should, therefore, be mindful of the importance of judgement and be aware of the limitations of metrics when making their assessment. By signing the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) the University has acknowledged that intellectual content is more important than publication metrics or the identity of a journal. Terms such as 'high quality research' or 'influential research' should be preferred to the words 'impact' and 'impactful', which may be misinterpreted as denoting 'journal-impact factor'.



It is recognised that the lines between research leadership (or education or clinical leadership) and service are not always clear-cut and that there may be differences between disciplines. Assessments should, therefore, be made within the context of relevant disciplinary norms, taking care to avoid double-counting and ensuring that decisions are objective and clearly documented.



The University aims to be a leader in driving an inclusive and respectful culture and in promoting a positive working environment for all in its community and high standards of conduct are expected from all staff. Formal sanctions will be taken into account when assessing the applicant's suitability for progression or promotion and staff with live disciplinary warnings on file may be excluded from applying.

The Role and Responsibilities of Committee Chairs

At each stage of the process, and in addition to ensuring the business of each committees is carried out in accordance with this guidance, the Chair is required to ensure that:

- Each application is assessed against the published Assessment Criteria;
- Committee members are aware of School/Institution ACP Guidance and understand that Indicators of Excellence are suggestive in nature and non-exhaustive; not all indicators will be relevant to all applicants;
- Appropriate consideration is given to any declared Contextual Factors and/or COVID-related impacts and advice is sought from the relevant HR Schools Team in advance of the meeting as appropriate;
- Appropriate consideration is given to applications where the subject area crosses School Committee boundaries (see Interdisciplinary/Cross-Departmental Applications);
- The Minutes (assessment records) of each Committee meeting are an accurate record, include the justifications for the Committee's decisions, reflect the scores awarded and are approved by each member; and,
- All necessary action is taken following approval of the Minutes.

Faculty Committee Chair

Specifically, the FC Chair is expected to ensure that:

- Applications are assessed to check whether the appropriate academic office has been applied for (and may request a revised application to be submitted in time for consideration; such cases are exceptional and must be clearly justified);
- There is an appropriate gender balance of applications and explanations provided by the Heads of Institution are reviewed and appropriate action taken before the FC meeting; and,
- The Institutional Statement is sufficiently detailed and contains sufficient explanation.
-

School Committee Chair

Specifically, the SC Chair is expected to ensure that they:

- Liaise, if necessary, with the Chair of any other SC to which a FC has referred an application;
- Liaise, if necessary, with the Chair of any FC that considered applications submitted to the SC.

Further Considerations of candidates' applications

Contextual Factors

The quality and impact of an applicant's performance should be assessed objectively and on the same basis as other applicants. It is also important to understand and address contextual factors by making appropriate equality-related adjustments to allow for a fair process where those who have faced these additional barriers will be considered on an even footing, although all applications that provide contextual factors will be individual, and so will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Committees should take into account that not all careers follow a standard and uninterrupted route and 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, teaching or administration.

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 Lead HR Business Partner.

COVID Impact Statements

As when reviewing declared contextual factors, the quality and impact of an applicant's performance should be assessed objectively and on the same basis as other applicants.

Appropriate adjustments should be made to allow for a fair process so that those who have faced these additional barriers and submitted an impact assessment are considered on an even footing. Candidates are still expected to demonstrate the same standard (quality) as other candidates in terms of the excellence of their contribution; however, the quantity of their output/productivity might be adjusted in light of the COVID impact statement.

A holistic approach is encouraged by the Committees towards the assessment, taking into account both outputs from before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Appropriate adjustments should be made by the Committees to allow for a fair process so that those who have faced these additional barriers and submitted an impact assessment are considered on an even footing.

All metrics should be considered in context with other factors, to ensure that a balanced view is taken of the applicant's overall contribution to research, teaching and service.

Interdisciplinary/Cross-Departmental Applications












If the subject area of an application is such that it crosses FC boundaries, whether or not the applicant has indicated that their application is interdisciplinary/cross-departmental, the Chair of the FC should ensure that, where appropriate, action is taken to obtain additional relevant information regarding the application (for e.g. duties carried out in other institutions) and, if necessary, additional References.

The FC may also decide that, in the interest of fairness, additional senior academic(s) with appropriate specialised knowledge are invited as consultant(s) to attend the meeting of the Committee for the consideration of the application concerned.

The application may also be referred for consideration to a different SC. In such cases, the FC should forward the application to the Secretary of the relevant SC(s), giving reasons and, if both Committees will be assessing the candidate, a view as to which SC evaluation should be given greater weight by the VCC.

Before the committee process

After the deadline for applications, the Secretary of the FC circulates a summary list of applicants and the full application documentation to each member of the FC. In advance of the FC meeting, the Chair and Secretary, in consultation with the FC members by circulation, confirms for each applicant:

-  Whether the application is interdisciplinary/cross-departmental (and if so, decides whether further information from and/or consultation with an additional person(s) is required);
-  Whether any Contextual Factors and/or COVID-related impacts have been declared (identifying what action to take and seeking advice from the relevant HR Schools Teams where necessary);
-  The choice of References, internal and external, that will be taken forward. The Secretary of the FC requesting the reference will also include the full application (without the Contextual Factors and/or COVID Impact Statement) and refer the referee to the relevant Assessment Criteria and Indicators of Excellence;
-  Where an application is a re-application, the previous year's References should be carried forward and consideration given to updating existing references if appropriate; this would be treated as one of the references for the current round;
-  What action may be required having reviewed the gender and ethnicity balance of the applications and seeking further information from the relevant Head of Institution as appropriate.
-  The appropriate person (usually the Head of Institution but may be delegated to another senior academic officer) to provide the Institutional Statement;
-  Whether information on College teaching and/or clinical/veterinary work is required (see additional details below);
-  Whether the application is for the appropriate level of academic office (and, in exceptional cases, whether a new application for a different office should be submitted);
-  If an applicant requests that their College teaching or work as Director of Studies should be taken into account, the Chair of the FC should request a statement from the Senior Tutor of the College at which the member of staff has regularly undertaken the greater part of their College teaching. The Senior Tutor should be asked to provide a factual description of the scope and amount of such teaching work, and comment on the effectiveness of the applicant's contribution.
-  If the applicant has made reference to their contribution to clinical work and postgraduate medical teaching and training, the Chair of the FC should request a statement from the appropriate NHS Trust to provide comment on their role and effectiveness.
-  If the applicant has made reference to their contribution to clinical work including postgraduate veterinary teaching and training, the Chair of the FC should request a statement from the appropriate Clinical Manager to provide comment on their role and effectiveness.

Faculty Committee Meeting

The FC meeting will consider all the documentation for each application and agree collectively the evaluation and scores against each of the Assessment Criteria documenting in each case whether the application for promotion/progression is supported and the reasons for its decision. The Committee should then rank the applicants in a list according to the strength of their applications and make its recommendation to the SC. The Chair of each FC should attend part of the relevant SC meeting in a non-voting capacity.

The Secretary of the FC will attend the meeting to provide advice and guidance as appropriate and, together with the Chair, oversee the fair and effective operation of the procedure. The Chair might also wish to invite the relevant Head of School (or another nominated member of the SC) as an invited observer, who then may pass any observations on to the School Committee. In addition, FCs may invite additional persons to attend meetings to assist in the consideration of interdisciplinary/cross-departmental applications, these persons are not committee members and are not entitled to vote but the names of those invited to attend may be disclosed to applicants.



Each member of each Committee has a responsibility to ensure its business is conducted in accordance with the guidance; the Chair of each Committee has a particular role in this regard. Each Committee member, and those attending the Committee meetings, should ensure that:

- they are familiar with this guidance (the Chair will ask each Member for confirmation);
- in considering the applications, they adhere to the Assessment Criteria and do not import additional considerations into their evaluations which may be construed as additional criteria;
- they treat Indicators of Excellence as being suggestive in nature and non-exhaustive; not all indicators will be relevant to all applicants;
- they are aware of their responsibilities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, including the potential risk of unconscious bias, and have completed the appropriate training (see Key Principles) to ensure their considerations are collective, fair, impartial and evidence based;
- they consider whether any allowance should be made for Contextual Factors and/or COVID-related impacts; **and** they state any declarations of interest to enable the Committee to agree appropriate action to be taken before consideration of applications.
- Each Committee, together with any other staff involved, is responsible for ensuring all relevant documentation and associated content is treated in the strictest of confidence.

Faculty Committee Minutes

The FC will provide a fairly and objectively worded minute that:

- Confirms whether:
 - an application has been treated as interdisciplinary/cross-departmental,
 - an application is to be referred to the SC from an FC in a different School,
 - if allowance has been made for Contextual Factors, and/or COVID-related impacts, and or
 - if there has been a departure from the standard scoring model and if so, the reasons.
- Provides a reasoned justification of the agreed evaluations and its determination of the rank order for each office, and
- Provides a justification where high scores have been awarded that indicate an exceptional contribution.
- Records where the Committee's assessment differs from that suggested by a referee(s) and where it has either taken strong account of, or apparently disregarded, a single critical reference amongst a group of positive references.

School Committee Meeting

The SC will check that applicants have been consistently assessed across the FC, clearly indicating in its minutes for each application any changes from the FC evaluations and the reasons, as well as whether the application for promotion/progression is supported.

The Chair of each FC should attend part of the relevant SC meeting in a non-voting capacity to present cases and provide clarification where needed. The relevant Lead HR Business Partner will act as Secretary, providing advice and guidance and, together with the Chair, overseeing the fair and effective operation of the procedure.

The relevant HR Schools Team will prepare and circulate the documentation not less than a week in advance of the meeting, including:

- an agenda;
- a copy of this guidance;
- the complete documentation for each applicant;
- comprehensive lists of all applicants for each academic office and;
- the approved FC Minutes including its evaluations, comments and ranking.

The full documentation received by the SC (from the FC), together with the SC's recommendations and signed Minutes should then be forwarded to the Secretary of the VCC Committee.

Applicants should **not** be informed of the outcome of the School Committee's evaluation or provided with feedback at this stage (see Outcome and Feedback for further information).

School Committee Minutes

Following the meeting, the SC will provide a fairly and objectively worded minute that:

- Confirms whether:
 - an application has been treated as interdisciplinary/cross-departmental,
 - an application is to be referred to the SC from an FC in a different School,
 - if allowance has been made for Contextual Factors and/or COVID-related impacts, and / or
 - if there has been a departure from the standard scoring model and if so, the reasons.
- Provides a reasoned justification of the agreed evaluations and its determination of the rank order for each office, including clear reasons for any adjustment in the FC evaluations, banding, scoring. If there is complete agreement between a FC and a SC no comment will be necessary.
- Provides a justification where high scores have been awarded that indicate an exceptional contribution.
- Records where the Committee's assessment differs from that suggested by a referee(s) and where it has either taken strong account of, or apparently disregarded, a single critical reference amongst a group of positive references, and;
- Provides feedback statements to be shared with unsuccessful applicants.
- Reference may be made to comments contained in referees' statements; however, any such reference must be anonymised.

Vice-Chancellor's Committee Meeting

The role of the Vice-Chancellor's Committee (VCC) is to moderate between the SCs to ensure that a consistent standard has been achieved for all applications. Therefore, the VCC will receive the rank order of candidates for each academic office and consider the documentary evidence for each applicant, deciding whether any adjustments in evaluation are necessary. The VCC will then make its recommendations to the GB concerning applicants that should be successful. The GB receives these recommendations and confirms the cases for promotion or progression.

The Secretary will circulate the documentation for the meeting electronically in good time in advance of the meeting. The documentation should comprise:

- an agenda;
- a copy of this guidance;
- the complete documentation for each applicant from the SCs;
- signed Minutes of the SC and FC with summary lists of evaluations and rankings agreed by the SC for all applicants in relation to each academic office applied to.

The Chairs of the SC, assisted by the respective external members, will present in turn their SC assessments, explaining for which candidates and why promotion/progression was supported and not supported.

They will also identify any cases where the SC reached a different conclusion from the FC, and

any cases in which non-standard aspects have caused difficulty. The role of the VCC is in part to moderate between the SCs to ensure that a consistent standard has been achieved.

Therefore, the VCC will consider the documented evidence in respect of each applicant and decide whether any adjustments in evaluations agreed by the FC and/or SC are necessary.

If there is complete agreement with previous Committee evaluations, banding and scorings, no further comment is necessary; however, where there is not complete agreement further comments must be recorded. Reference may be made in the Minutes to comments contained in referees' statements but will be anonymised.

Outcomes and Decision of the General Board

The GB will receive the recommendations from the VCC no later than the date specified in the Timetable and will meet to assess the recommendations from the VCC and make its decision on the outcome of each application. The GB will approve applications for Associate Professorships, and the University will approve applications for Professorships (Grades 11 and 12) by Grace, following publication of a Report of the GB (the GB's Report will usually list, for information, the successful Associate Professorship appointments in that year's round).

Following the GB meeting, each applicant, Head of Institutions and Chair of FC will be informed of the outcome of their respective applications simultaneously by email.

The GB, at its discretion and with the continued input and support of the academic community, may make changes to this guidance as it deems necessary, provided those changes are in line with the Key Principles and made, in the light of experience, for the effective running of future rounds. Recording of statistical and equality of opportunity data relating to the exercise will be produced by the Human Resources Division.





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