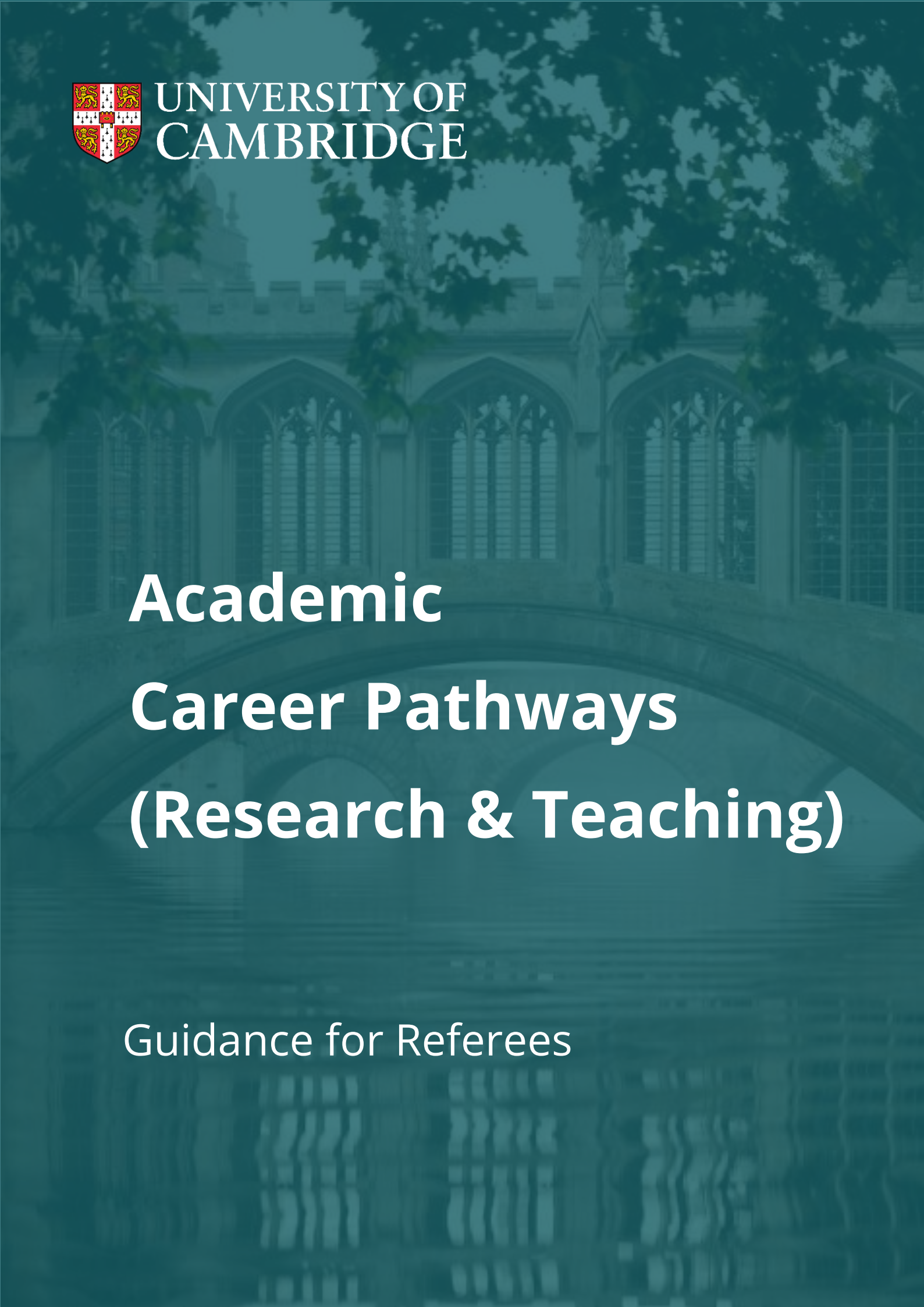

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Academic Career Pathways (Research & Teaching)

Guidance for Referees

Contents

Introduction

The University of Cambridge operates the Academic Career Pathways (Research and Teaching) scheme in order to recognise and reward outstanding contributions and celebrate academic achievement through promotion. The scheme offers the opportunity for eligible employees to apply for promotion to the academic offices of Associate Professor (Grade 10), Professor (Grade 11), Clinical Professor and Professor at Grade 12).

Applications made under this scheme are assessed by three levels of committees; the Faculty Committee, School Committee and Vice-Chancellor's Committee.

As part of this scheme, references are gathered from academic colleagues both internal and external to the University, to support an application. This document provides information to assist referees in the preparation of a reference.

The number of references gathered varies depending on the office for which the individual has applied (the table below provides details). Referees are nominated by both the applicant and the Faculty Committee who will be conducting the first stage of assessment. Prior to nominating referees, both applicants and Faculty Committees must confirm with the individuals they wish to nominate that they are willing and able to provide a reference.

A referee's input is critical in enabling a full and objective assessment of an applicant's contribution. We therefore request referees to comment across the entire range of an applicant's duties, with explicit reference to the relevant Assessment Criteria, and to provide a full and frank appraisal of the applicant's suitability for promotion/progression. References will be received and reviewed by all three committees.

Application	Applicant nominates	Faculty Committee nominates	Total References
Professorship (G11 and G12) and Clinical Professorship	2 (+ 1 reserve)	3 (+ 1 reserve)	5
Associate Professor (G10)	1 (+ 1 reserve)	1 (+ 1 reserve)	2

Summary of first-time application referencing requirements

Reapplications

An individual who has applied for the same office in the previous ACP R&T exercise, but was unsuccessful, can apply again in the following exercise. This would be considered a reapplication. For reapplications, the references from the previous exercise are carried forward to the current exercise. In addition, further references are required. The number of new references required for a reapplication are shown in the table below.

If there have been significant changes in the reapplicant's publication record or other circumstances since the last exercise, a referee from the last exercise may be contacted in order to update their previously provided reference, i.e. to indicate whether the changes have affected their assessment of the reapplicant's suitability for promotion. In these situations, an updated reference would be considered one of the new references gathered for the reapplication.

Application	Applicant nominates	Faculty Committee nominates	Total References
Professorship (G11 and G12) and Clinical Professorship	1 (+ 1 reserve)	2 (+ 1 reserve)	3
Associate Professor (G10)	1 (+ 1 reserve)	1 (+ 1 reserve)	2

*Summary of reapplicant referee requirements (**additional** to the references carried forward from the previous year)*

Why have you been contacted?

You have been contacted as you have been nominated either by the applicant, or by the Faculty Committee which will conduct the first stage of assessment. The applicant or the Faculty Committee will have nominated you as they feel that you will be able to provide a qualitative assessment of the applicant and give a full and frank appraisal of their suitability for promotion.

You should have been contacted by the applicant or the Faculty Committee prior to receiving the formal reference request email. If this is not the case, and you are not willing or able to provide a reference, please contact the Faculty Committee Chair or Secretary as per the contact details in the email you were sent.

Please note that you do not need to know the applicant personally in order to provide a reference. The reference should be provided as an objective assessment of the evidence in the application, as opposed to a personal reference. Therefore, if you are happy to do so, we would appreciate your assessment of the applicant's suitability for promotion, based on the content of their application alone.

Assessment of applications

As explained in the introduction, applications made under this scheme are assessed by three levels of committees; the Faculty Committee, School Committee and the Vice-Chancellor's Committee.

Applications for promotion are assessed in relation to the Assessment Criteria for the office for which the applicant has applied, using the evidence provided in the application. The Assessment Criteria are as follows:

- Research and Research Leadership;
- Teaching and Researcher Development; and
- Service to the University and to the Academic Community.

Alongside the Assessment Criteria, the scheme guidance provides example Indicators of Excellence. The criteria/indicators for each office differ and can be viewed here:

- Professor at Grade 12
- Clinical Professor
- Professor (Grade 11)
- Associate Professor (Grade 10)

Each applicant will be scored in each of the above Assessment Criteria. The weightings of scoring vary depending on the office for which they have applied. In some circumstances, there is also a mechanism through which the committee can depart from the standard scoring model. The score awarded for each Assessment Criterion will fall into one of five performance descriptors (bandings), which are listed below. You are asked to use these descriptors, as appropriate, in your reference to indicate the level of performance you feel the applicant has achieved. When completing your reference using the template form, please also use the tick boxes provided to indicate what level of evidence you feel the applicant has provided overall for each Assessment Criterion.

- Outstanding Evidence*
- Strong Evidence**
- Moderate Evidence
- Insufficient/Unclear Evidence
- Clearly Unsatisfactory

** A score in the Outstanding Evidence banding would be expected for applications which demonstrate the applicant has delivered exceptional accomplishments, demonstrated in their achievement of the Assessment Criteria.*

*** A score in the Strong Evidence banding would be expected for applications which demonstrate the applicant has exceeded expectations, demonstrated in their achievement of the Assessment Criteria.*

Writing your reference

This section aims to provide some guidance about what to include in your reference.

The email you received formally requesting a reference will have provided a link to the University's ACP referee portal, through which you can view the applicant's application documentation and submit your reference. The email also provided a template reference form for you to complete, which asks you to comment on each of the Assessment Criteria and use the tick boxes to indicate the level of evidence you feel the applicant has provided overall for each Assessment Criterion. Once completed, please submit the form as an attachment via the ACP referee portal (in PDF format only), or you can type your reference directly into the text box on the ACP referee portal. You will see both of these options once you have signed into the ACP referee portal, using the details in the email.

It would be appreciated if your reference could cover the following points:

1. Based on your knowledge of the applicant's Research and Research Leadership, Teaching and Researcher Development and Service to the University and to the Academic Community, your assessment as to their achievement of the Assessment Criteria for promotion to the office for which they have applied, and their overall suitability for promotion to that office. It is understood that you may not be able to comment across all three criteria; if this is the case, please make this clear in your reference.
2. It would be helpful if you can focus principally on an applicant's achievements and research quality since their last promotion/appointment, to demonstrate their rising career trajectory. Applicants and committees are both expected to focus principally on and take greater account of these more recent achievements, although earlier achievements can be taken into account in the assessment of an applicant's suitability for promotion.
3. It would be appreciated if you could avoid the use of subjective colloquial terms such as "rising star" in your reference. As noted in the section "Assessment of Applications", it would be helpful if you can use the performance descriptors described in order to indicate the level of performance you feel the applicant has achieved.
4. Your view of the size and importance of the applicant's field, indicating where the applicant stands in comparison with others working in the same field.
5. If the applicant has indicated that their research is multidisciplinary, it would be helpful if you could indicate the areas of their work with which you are most familiar.
6. If you know the applicant personally or have collaborated/worked with them, please declare this and specify the nature of your relationship. This includes if you have acted as their PhD supervisor or are a former student.

Reviewing an applicant's research

In addition to reviewing the application documentation provided by the applicant, you may wish to review a sample of their research outputs to assist in your assessment of their application. It is recommended that you utilise the applicant's publications list to identify and locate research outputs for your review. Applicants are asked to provide their publications list, set out in accordance with the conventions of the relevant academic discipline.

San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

The University is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA recognises the need to improve the ways in which the outputs of scholarly research are evaluated, and as a signatory, the University expects applicants to apply the principles of DORA when preparing their applications. It would therefore be helpful if you could consider the DORA principles when preparing your reference. More information about DORA, its principles and aims can be found here: https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-policy/DORA

In particular, you are asked that you do not refer to journal titles or journal impact factors as a marker of research quality in your reference, or otherwise indicate that publications in certain journals are indicative of research quality.

Points to note

1. When preparing a promotion application, the ACP application portal automatically populates an applicant's appointment start date using data in the University's HR system. However, there are some circumstances when this appointment start date may not be the appropriate date to refer to for the purposes of promotion applications, including the change in academic titles in October 2021, and the change in title of Grade 9 academics on passing probation (from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor). These title changes appear as new appointments in the HR system. Referees are therefore asked to be mindful of the appointment start dates shown in the application and to refer to the applicant's CV to determine their professional history.
2. In March 2022, a new Clinical Professorship office was introduced. This office is only available to holders of University offices whose duties are primarily concerned with research/scholarship or teaching and research/scholarship, who also hold an honorary consultant contract (i.e. are registered with the GMC, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) with a licence to practice and, if GMC-registered as consultant level, are on the specialist register).
3. Applicants can include details of all research and research-led publications that are publicly available for consideration in their application, i.e. copies are obtainable at the time of application, or at some previous time, by members of the public through normal trade channels.
4. 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.

Confidentiality

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. Therefore, when submitting your reference, we ask that you indicate whether or not you consent for your reference to be shared with the applicant, should they request it.

Please note however, even if you indicate that you do not consent for your reference to be shared, if requested, the applicant will be informed of the names of the referees who have been asked to provide a reference.