



Code: QA207
Title: **Academic Promotions Policy**
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Approval: University Management Team
Policy Owner: Deputy President & Registrar

1. Introduction

University of Galway values excellence and aims to create an environment in which all staff can achieve their full potential. We recognise that this requires a supportive environment in which excellence is fostered and equality, diversity and inclusion are cherished. This Policy aims to help deliver on those values to the benefit of both our academic staff and, ultimately, the University as a whole.

2. Scope and Eligibility

This policy covers promotion of academic staff to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, Professor in and Personal Professor.

Candidates for promotion will not have reached the normal retirement age¹ prior to the effective date of promotion. Normally, a period of continuous employment of three years at University of Galway is expected prior to applying for promotion under this scheme. Simultaneous applications for promotion to different levels are not permitted. Re-application within two years of an unsuccessful application is only permitted in certain clearly defined circumstances (see section 7.2 below).

3. Key Principles

- The basis for determining promotion shall be academic peer review, inclusive of external assessors.
- Promotion shall be based on performance across the following three areas:
 - Research and Scholarship;
 - Teaching & Learning;

¹ A candidate should refer to their contract of employment and relevant national legislation for details on their retirement age.

- Academic Leadership & Contribution.
- All applications are judged on an individual basis in the context of the [Competency Framework for Academic Roles at University of Galway](#). Promotions shall not be based on candidates competing against each other, but will instead be based on candidates crossing defined thresholds, qualitative and quantitative.
- No consideration may be given to School or College financial matters by a Head of School or Dean in their commentary on the merits of an individual application.
- A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion shall be at the core of the policy. This will include clear guidelines for assessing protected leave, etc. Compliance with this shall be monitored on the basis of three-year rolling averages.
- Applications for promotion are considered on a bi-annual basis by the Academic Promotions Committee.
- The process shall be subject to review in consultation with the academic unions on a three-yearly basis.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

University of Galway is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff irrespective of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, nationality or ethnic or national origin, or membership of the Irish Travelling Community. The mechanism for assessing academic output towards promotion is underpinned by this commitment.

Accordingly, consideration will be given in the assessment of an application to any personal, family or non-academic circumstances since the candidate's last promotion or appointment which have been brought to the attention of the Academic Promotions Committee by the candidate and which have impacted on a staff member's capacity to produce the same quantity of output as a comparable staff member who has not been impacted or taken time out from their careers.

Recognising a key strategic objective of the University Strategic Plan Vision 2020, namely "to advance our agenda of achieving gender equality in our organization", the university acknowledges that women are under-represented at senior grades and encourages women to apply for promotion. Applications from full-time and part-time staff are welcome as are applications from individuals who are protected under the grounds in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018.

5. Frequency

The Academic Promotions Committee will consider applications that have been submitted to HR by the appropriate deadline. There shall be two such deadlines per annum: 16.00 on the last day of February and 16.00 on the last day of August.

6. Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

When the PMDS process is re-established, candidates must have engaged and be up to date with their PMDS review in advance of an application being submitted.

7. The Role of the Candidate

7.1. Prior to Submission

Prior to submitting an application for promotion the candidates must ensure that they have completed the following steps in the promotional process:

- Candidates will discuss their application with their Head of School.² Part of the conversation with the Head of School should be in relation to the candidate's overall development. When the PMDS process is re-established, an agreed development plan will form part of the submission for promotion.
- Candidates will nominate four External Assessors as per the guidelines outlined in the section "The Role of the External Assessor".
- Candidates may include the names of up to two external assessors that they do not wish to be considered as external assessors.

7.2. Application Process

Candidates who wish to apply for promotion will be required to submit their application through University of Galway's online application system. Applications should be effectively presented; thorough yet concise, and comply with the word and length limits where indicated. Where a candidate has previously applied unsuccessfully for promotion, a statement detailing how the feedback from that application has been addressed will normally be provided.

Candidates must provide details of their employment history. A template document, for this purpose can be found on the HR website. The completed document is to be uploaded through the application website.

² *In the case of candidates with a joint appointment, they should speak to both Heads of School. Where the candidate is a Head of School, they should discuss their application with their Executive Dean. Where the candidate is an Executive Dean, they should discuss their application with the President or his nominee.*

The Head of School will provide a commentary on the candidate's application, with oversight from the Executive Dean, normally no later than two weeks after the applications deadline (see sections 8 and 9). The Head of School and Executive Dean commentary must clearly relate exclusively to the merits of the candidate's application and may not factor in other School or College-wide considerations such as finance, etc. The candidate, if he/she so wishes, is entitled to submit a response to the commentary within two weeks of the applications deadline.

The time limits which apply to unsuccessful candidates who wish to re-apply for promotion are outlined in the table below.

Promotion outcome	Time limit to reapplying
Fail on a single non-core criterion but not promoted	Cannot apply again for any level for 1 year
Fail on any core criterion	Cannot apply again for any level for 2 years
Fail on more than one non-core criterion	Cannot apply again for any level for 2 years

8. The Role of the Head of School

The Head of School will:-

- Provide advice to eligible academic staff in the School about their promotion aspirations and the timing of their application.
- Discuss the application with the potential candidate. This conversation should also focus on the developmental needs of the candidate.
- Provide a short commentary on the candidate's application for promotion. The Head of School will also comment on the candidate's engagement with the PMDS process.
- In the case that the candidate has previously applied unsuccessfully for promotion, the Head of School will comment on the extent to which the feedback on that application has been addressed.
- The Head of School will nominate:
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Personal Professor;
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Professor in;
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor.
- The Head of School should liaise with the Head of Discipline in the candidate's discipline when compiling the list of External Assessors. The Head of School's list of nominees will not be shared with the candidate. Further details are contained in the section relating to External Assessor reports.
- In the case where a candidate is a Head of School, the Executive Dean will undertake the Head of School function in respect of this Policy for all candidates from that School

in that round of applications. In the case of the candidate being an Executive Dean, the President will nominate a senior member of the College to undertake this role.

9. The Role of the Executive Dean

The Executive Dean will:

- Exercise oversight and sign off on the Head of School commentary. This commentary will be available to the candidate for comment. The candidate has a right to reply to the commentary.
- Review the list of nominated External Assessors provided by the Head of School and may comment on or add to this list. The list of nominees from the Head of School and Executive Dean will not be shared with the candidate other than as set out in Section 16 below.
- In the case where the candidate is an Executive Dean, the President will nominate a senior member of academic staff to undertake this role.

10. Membership of the Academic Promotions Committee

Membership of the Academic Promotions Committee will be proposed by the President and approved by the Academic Council. The list of approved names will be published on the HR website.

- Deputy President and Registrar (Chair) (ex officio)
- Vice-President for Research (ex officio)
- 2 Full Professors from each College (1 Male, 1 Female)³ from different domains
- 4 President's Nominees, who must be at Personal Professor or above (gender to ensure that the Board overall is balanced, and also with consideration given to the breadth of disciplinary representation).
- 2 independent oversight assessors, one from a STEM area, one from an ABL area, who have significant experience of promotions in an HE setting. The President will nominate 4 external members and the Unions will identify their preferred nominees.

Apart from the ex officio and external members, the membership term of the APC will normally be for three years, which may be renewed, exceptionally, for up to a further three years where consistency and continuity require this. Membership of the APC is subject to review by the President, as required.

³ The College members shall be appointed by Academic Council.

In order to ensure continuity and a rolling renewal of membership, the President's first cohort of nominees will serve on the committee for two years. In addition, initially one professorial nominee from each College will serve for three years, and one for four years. All subsequent appointments will be for three years. This is to ensure a rolling turnover of one-third of the Committee each year.

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the meeting is quorate, that is, that there are at least nine members of the APC present, and that at least 40% of those present are female and 40% male. Where this is not the case, the meeting shall be rescheduled. In addition, at least two members of staff from an applicant's College must be present when that application is considered. Attendance will be monitored on an annual basis and, if necessary, recommendations for changing the composition of the APC made to Academic Council.

The Chair of the APC will conduct workshops for candidates approximately one month before the closing date for applications. The Academic Promotions Committee will take into consideration possible conflicts of interest as part of its deliberations having regard to the [University Conflict of Interest Policy QA413](#).

The Academic Promotions Committee will be supported administratively by HR, and the Director of HR or senior nominee shall be in attendance at all meetings.

11. The Role of the Academic Promotions Committee

All candidates for promotion will be assessed under the following 3 criteria:

- Research and Scholarship
- Teaching and Learning
- Academic Leadership and Contribution

The Academic Promotions Committee will assess candidates against the criteria of the scheme. Candidates are expected to make and demonstrate a clear and unequivocal case that they are currently performing at the level to which they are applying, and that they have the drive and capacity to continue performing at that level. Candidates should refer to the [Competency Framework for Academic Roles at University of Galway](#) when making this case.

On receipt of an application for promotion, the Academic Promotions Committee will determine if there is a prima facie case to assess the application. If the Academic Promotions Committee determines that:

- a prima facie case exists, the application will be advanced to External Assessors;
- a prima facie case does not exist, feedback will be provided to the candidate.

For candidates for whom a prima facie case exists, the Academic Promotions Committee will:

- Select and approve the final list of potential External Assessors submitted by the candidate and Head of School/Executive Dean. Exceptionally, the Academic Promotions Committee may add further names to the list, and it will record the circumstances that made this necessary.
- Upon receipt of the appropriate number of external assessments, assess all applications for promotion to Personal Professor, Professor in and Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor. In its assessment, the Academic Promotions Committee will consider all evidence provided by the candidate and will be informed by, but not bound by, the comments of the Head of School and Executive Dean and the reports of External Assessors.
- Decide the names of candidates that shall be recommended to the President for promotion, for final adoption.
- Decide the names of candidates that shall not be recommended to the President for promotion, for final adoption.

12. The External Assessor

12.1. Competence of the External Assessor

External Assessors should be:-

- In the case of application for promotion to Personal Professor and Professor in, at the level of Full Professor (Established or Personal);
- In the case of application for promotion to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, at least at the level of Professor in/Personal Professor, as used in this University, or its equivalent elsewhere;
- In a leading academic institution, or have retired from such a position within the past five years;
- A leading academic with an international profile;
- Cognisant of the norms within the candidate's academic discipline and be qualified to comment on the candidate's achievements and her/his suitability for promotion.⁴
- Have no apparent [conflict of interest](#).
- External Assessors are not referees, and they should not be anyone with whom you have collaborated or worked together. An External Assessor cannot have been an external examiner for taught courses or on any PhD supervised by the promotion candidate in the last 5 years from date of application.

⁴ Exceptionally, where a candidate's strengths are in an area with limited precise external expertise available, some external assessors may be appointed who are not active in precisely the same discipline or sub-discipline as the candidate, but who can demonstrate familiarity with standards of excellence in that discipline and who are thus qualified to assess the candidate against the criteria.

12.2. Role of the External Assessor

- External Assessors are required to give an assessment of the applications for promotion sent to them for review. They should **not** provide a reference for the candidate. Any assessments considered by the Committee to have been written as references will be discarded and replacement assessments sought.
- External Assessors will be required to assess the overall academic performance of the candidate. They will be invited to provide an independent, unbiased assessment of the level of the candidate's achievements in Research and Scholarship, Teaching & Learning, and Academic Leadership and Contribution, with reference to the [Competency Framework for Academic Roles at University Galway](#), taking into account the norms for the discipline.
- In addition, External Assessors will be invited to comment on:
 - Whether there is clear evidence of an upward trajectory and forward-looking agenda;
 - Whether the case meets international standards for promotion to the relevant level;
 - How the application compares with recent successful applications for promotion to the equivalent level within the assessor's own institution.
- External Assessors will be required to sign a conflict of interest declaration to accompany their assessments.

12.3. External Assessor Nomination Process

- A candidate will nominate four potential external assessors for approval by the Academic Promotions Committee. The College must confirm that each External Assessor nominated is available and willing to undertake this duty. Candidates may include the names of up to two external assessors that they do not wish to be considered as external assessors.
- The Head of School/Executive Dean will nominate:⁵
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Personal Professor;
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Professor in;
 - Four External Assessors for applicants applying for promotion to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor.
 - In cases where additional expertise is required, the APC may revert to the HoS for further nominations.
- The Head of School and Executive Dean may seek advice from the Head of Discipline when forming the long list of potential External Assessors. In larger Schools, a Head of

⁵ This list should be agreed between the relevant Head of School and Executive Dean. In the event of disagreement, the Dean's decision will be final.

School may nominate a Section Head to provide a list of potential External Assessors, if appropriate.

- Where the APC determines that a candidate has demonstrated a prima facie case, the APC will agree a ranked list of External Assessors from the candidate's list and, separately, from the Head of School/Executive Dean's list and select external assessors, as follows:
 - Promotion to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor: 2 external assessors (1 from the candidate and 1 from the HoS/Executive Dean);
 - Promotion to Professor in or Personal Professor: 3 external assessors (1 from the candidate and 2 from the HoS/Executive Dean).
- A decision in favour of an application for promotion cannot be made in the absence of the required number of External Assessor reports for the candidate.

13. Conclusion of the Process

Following the conclusion of the process:

- The names of candidates recommended for promotion by the APC will be forwarded to the President by HR for adoption.
- The names of candidates not recommended for promotion by the APC will also be forwarded to the President by HR.
- Following the President's adoption of the recommendations, candidates will be informed in writing by the Chair of the Committee of the decision in respect of their application and will be given a feedback report on the reason/s for that decision.
- A candidate who requires copies of her/his External Assessors' reports should contact the Freedom of Information Office.
- College Deans and Heads of School will be informed of the outcome of the assessment process and will be provided with a copy of the feedback reports in relation to candidates from their School/College.
- Candidates will also be offered the opportunity for oral feedback, normally within 30 days of the notification of the outcome of the application. The member of the APC who drafts the candidate feedback will also provide oral feedback to the candidate with the Chair or his/her nominee.
- Following oral feedback, a short note of the feedback meeting will be drafted and retained as a record of the meeting. The note will be sent to the candidate for their review and agreement following the oral feedback meeting.
- UMT will be notified of successful candidates as an item of routine business.
- A list of promoted candidates will be forwarded for noting at the first meeting of both the Governing Authority and Academic Council following the conclusion of the process.
- External Assessors may be advised of the outcome for the candidate for whom he/she provided an assessment.

- The effective date of promotion for successful candidates will be the 1st day of the following April (for applications to the August deadline) or the following October (for applications to the February deadline). Candidates will be appointed to the first point on the scale to which they have been promoted, unless their current salary already exceeds this, in which case they will be appointed to the first point above their current salary.

14. Feedback

Accurate notes will be taken as part of the process that reflect the basis of the decision made. In the interests of transparency, best practice and staff development, at the conclusion of the process, all candidates will be given written feedback on their application, together with the opportunity for oral feedback by the Chairperson, or nominee, and one other member of the Academic Promotions Committee.

These notes will support the communication of the promotion decision so that the applicant has sufficient clarity and a link will be developed between the feedback received and the PMDS process, when established, so that feedback can be incorporated into an individual's development plan.

Candidates attending a feedback meeting may be accompanied by either an University of Galway colleague or a representative from their union. The name of the colleague/representative, and their relationship to the candidate, must be forwarded to HR 3 working days prior to the feedback meeting.

15. Confidentiality

Confidentiality, by all participants, will be maintained throughout the process. All discussion during the assessment process and any data generated will remain confidential to the members of the Academic Promotions Committee. The names of promoted candidates will not be released until the President has adopted the recommendations of the Academic Promotions Committee and the candidates have been advised accordingly.

16. Freedom of Information

The University comes under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. This legislation confers on individuals a legal right of access to information held by the University concerning them and a legal right to receive reasons for decisions that have materially affected them.

However, without recourse to the Freedom of Information Act, candidates will, at the conclusion of the assessment process, receive a detailed written note that supports the communication of the promotion decision so that the applicant has sufficient clarity as to the basis of the decision. Other assessment records, with the exception of those of the external assessor, such as minutes, personal notes, discussion documents, and correspondence, will also be made available if requested.

All assessment records should therefore be sufficiently clear and detailed to fulfil a request for the reasons for the decisions.

Other documents such as the external assessor's reports can be sought if required through the Freedom of Information process.⁶

17. Appeals

17.1. Committee Role and Composition

- i. The Academic Promotions Appeals Committee (APAC) will be established as an independent committee. Once membership has been proposed as set out in clause ii, it will be approved by Údarás na hOllscoile.
- ii. The APAC will be composed of five members, to be appointed as follows:
 - a. A non-Governing Authority Full Professor Emeritus (recently retired) to be appointed as Chair from a short-list of potential candidates by agreement of University of Galway management and the trade unions;
 - b. Two senior academic members of University of Galway academic staff (at the rank of full Professor, one male and one female) to be appointed by the President;
 - c. One member of University of Galway academic staff (at the rank of full Professor) to be elected by Academic Council;
 - d. One senior external academic (at the level of full Professor) to be nominated by IFUT and SIPTU.
- iii. The term of office of the Chair of APAC will be co-terminus with Údarás na hOllscoile.
- iv. The members of the APAC will not simultaneously be members of the Academic Promotions Committee (APC).
- v. All parties will ensure that there are at least two members of each gender on the APAC. (See Appendix 1.)

⁶ Further information on University of Galway's FOI Office is at: <http://www.universityofgalway.ie/foi/>

- vi. The APAC will be supported where required by the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs.

17.2. Committee Procedures

- i. Candidates who have not been recommended for promotion by the APC shall be afforded the opportunity to receive substantial feedback, consisting of written and oral feedback and the scores in relation to their applications, in line with section 14 above. An appeal shall only be considered by the APAC after the candidate has attended for oral feedback. Appeals must be lodged with the University no later than thirty days following the meeting at which oral feedback is provided.
- ii. The role of the APAC is to consider appeals made, in writing, by candidates for promotion to be based on alleged defects in the application of the procedures for promotion set out in the university's policies and procedures. The only basis for an appeal shall be the following:
 - a. Failure to follow in due manner University policy and procedures for the consideration of applications for promotion. All University policies and procedures are subject to statutory/anti-discriminatory requirements;
 - b. Denial of natural justice;
 - c. Manifestly unfair or unreasonable application of the criteria for the granting of promotions.
- iii. The role of the APAC is to consider whether or not due process has prevailed in the consideration by the APC of an application for promotion. Accordingly, an appeal will not be a re-hearing or a general review of the application.
- iv. The appellant is required to specify the grounds of the appeal and to demonstrate why the promotions process was so defective as to influence the decision. The consideration of the APAC will be confined to the issues raised in the grounds of appeal. The APAC will consider fresh evidence in support of the appellant's appeal when it is germane to, and substantiates, the alleged defect.
- v. In considering an appeal, the APAC shall provide the APC with the opportunity to comment on the appeal.
- vi. The APAC will determine whether any of the alleged defects could have influenced the outcome. They will have available to them all the materials available to the APC.
- vii. The setting of academic standards to be used in the promotion process is a matter for the exclusive competence of the APC. Nothing in this process shall have the effect of substituting a differing academic judgement to that validly arrived at by the APC.

- viii. The APAC may come to one of the following conclusions:
- a. No procedural defects. The appeal is not upheld. The APAC shall provide the appellant and the APC with a clear rationale for its decision in writing;
 - b. Procedural defects are found to have occurred, but they are found not to have influenced the outcome. The appeal is not upheld. The APAC shall provide the appellant and the APC with a clear rationale for its decision in writing. The APAC shall require that the APC rectify the procedural defects found by the APAC and shall supply the APC with sufficient detail of the defect to allow the APC to understand the basis of the decision. The APC is required to ensure that a remedy is put in place. The APC shall inform the APAC of the intended remedial action;
 - c. Procedural defects are found to have occurred and they are deemed to have had the potential to influence the outcome. The appeal is upheld. The APAC shall inform the appellant of its decision and of its consequences in writing. The APAC shall require that the APC rectify the procedural defects found by the APAC, and shall supply the APC with sufficient detail of the defect to allow the APC to understand the basis of the decision. The APC is required to ensure that a remedy is put in place and will reconsider the application.
- ix. The reconsideration of the application(s) by the APC may come to one of the following conclusions:
- a. Reject the original outcome. The re-examination of the application results in a recommendation that the prima facie case has been established. The application then goes to external assessment according to procedure. If successful, the effective date of promotion will be the same date as for all other applicants in that round. The APC will provide the rationale and inform the APAC of its decision;
 - b. Accept the original outcome. The re-examination of the application results in the original decision not to promote being upheld. This recommendation is forwarded to the APAC, with the rationale for the decision set against the grounds on which the appeal had been upheld.
- x. The APAC at this stage will consider the response of the APC and decide on one of the following courses of action:
- a. If the APAC forms the view that the APC has insufficiently addressed the matters referred back to it, it may refer the appeal back to the APC a second time for reconsideration.
 - b. If the APAC forms the view that the APC has sufficiently addressed the grounds of appeal, it will inform the APC of this, and the original decision will stand.
- xi. The reconsideration of the application(s) by the APC under 17.2.x.a. above may come to one of the following conclusions:
- a. Reject the original outcome. The further re-examination of the application results in a recommendation that the prima facie case has been established.

The application will then be advanced to external assessment according to the terms of this Policy and related procedures. If successful, the effective date of promotion will be the same date as for all other applicants in that round. The APC will provide the rationale and inform the APAC of its decision;

- b. Accept the original outcome. The further re-examination of the application results in the original decision not to promote being upheld. The rationale for the decision shall be set against the grounds on which the appeal had been upheld. This decision shall be final.

- xii. At the conclusion of the appeals process, the APAC will communicate the decision to the appellant, providing a clear basis for the final determination.

- xiii. The APAC recommendations and reports on individual appeals and in general may be made on a majority basis. Where the decisions are not unanimous, the totality of the recommendations will be reflected in the committee's finding or report, inclusive of individual committee members' views, and made available to the appellant on request.

- xiv. The applicant has the right to dispute the findings and refer the matter on to the WRC and Labour Court if required, once all internal procedures have been exhausted.

- xv. The APAC shall provide Governing Authority with an annual report on its activities.

Deputy President and Registrar,
7 June 2022.

Appendix 1 – Academic Promotions Appeals Committee.

Membership and Procedure for Appointment of Members

Membership

1. The Chair shall be a non-Governing Authority Full Professor Emeritus (recently retired), appointed from a short-list of potential candidates by agreement of University of Galway management and the trade unions.
2. The President shall appoint two further members of University of Galway academic staff at the rank of full Professor, one male and one female.
3. The Academic Council shall elect one member of University Galway academic staff at the rank of full Professor.
4. SIPTU and IFUT shall nominate one senior external academic at the rank of full Professor.
5. At all times the membership must consist of at least two male and two female professors.

Appointment Procedure

1. The Chair's term shall in each case be until the end of the term of office of Údarás na hOllscoile.
2. The term of office of all other members shall normally be three years. In order to ensure a rolling membership, two of those appointed at the outset (one Presidential appointee and the academic union appointee) shall serve for four years.
3. Following the election of the Academic Council member at the beginning of the process, the unions shall nominate a member who is not of the same gender as the Academic Council nominee.
4. When two members rotate out of the Committee, they shall be one male and one female. Their successors shall be one female and one male, i.e. the departing male colleague shall be replaced by a female nominee, and vice-versa. This will ensure that no nominating party is constrained permanently in the gender of their appointee.

Name	Responsibility
Academic Council	Membership of the Academic Promotions Committee will be approved by the Academic Council.
President	Membership of the Academic Promotions Committee will be proposed by the President. Adoption of Committee recommendations.
Deputy President and Registrar	Policy Owner
Director of Human Resources	Director of HR or nominee attend APC meetings. The scheme is supported administratively by HR.
Academic Promotions Committee	Adherence to and application of policy in their role as members of the Academic Promotions Committee