Exeter Academic Review Recommendations- 2023

Introduction- About the Review

- The Exeter Academic Review (EAR) was commissioned in July 2022 by the Wellbeing, Inclusion & Culture Committee (WICC). The aim was to review the probation, promotion and progression processes and procedures to ensure University of Exeter continue to provide an attractive career structure which reflects and rewards institutional priorities in line with the University Values and Strategy 2030.

- The review has included a wide-ranging consultation in terms one and two across the academic community, with the goal of better recognising the variety of academic careers undertaken and the flexibility required to support our staff to achieve academic success. To compliment the results of the consultation, an external consultant was commissioned to undertake research into the probation, promotion and progression processes within the sector, looking at institutions both nationally and internationally.

Introduction- About the Review

- Using both the information gathered via internal feedback and the external consultant report, the review group created 16 recommendations, were presented to the following committees: WICC (WICC), University Executive Board (UEB) and Senate. 12 of the recommendations were approved and can be viewed in the subsequent slides. 2 recommendations were not approved (11 and 2) and 2 recommendations require further investigation (13 and 15).

- Implementation of the 12 recommendations will take place over the next 12 months.

Phase 1 (July-September 2023)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	Justification	
1	Unify, simplify, and clearly define criteria for probation & promotion.	Criteria to be defined for all job families under headings as follows: (i) research (ii) education, (iii) citizenship, (iv) leadership and management (v) business, engagement and impact (BEI)	This streamlined and unified approach to criteria, will create consistency between job families and will help enable the movement between job families. This will also allow the institution to recognise and reward the changing academic endeavour by explicitly including areas such as professional practice, knowledge exchange and capacity building, and reflect the increased emphasis on team-working, leadership and management skills within S2030.
5	Implement annual review process to pro-actively identify colleague eligibility for promotion.	Implement an annual pro-active CV review process for promotion specific to each job family, in line with recommendation 1.	Annual proactive review of all eligible colleagues for promotion by Faculties will encourage and identify those less likely to have the confidence to put themselves forward and/or with potentially less supportive line-managers. When identifying candidates for promotion there should not be an assumption everyone wishes to be promoted or that the 'terminal' position/grade for every colleague is Professor but on ensuring an appropriate conversation has been undertaken.

Phase 1 (July-September 2023)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	Justification	
7	Clear and timely feedback to be given to applicants at each stage of the promotion process.	Implement a formal feedback process where colleagues at each stage of the promotion process receive feedback (whether successful or not).	Implementing a process where colleagues receive feedback on each stage of the promotion process (whether successful or not), will create better transparency in the process as well as improve the experience and support for those applying – it will support those going forward in areas for focus, and especially those who are not in specific actions to enhance their application.
8	Update E&S progression guidance to remove requirement for business case.	Update guidance to remove the implication that a business case is required by E&S staff for promotion.	This will create a fair and equitable application process across all job families. Concerns around financial implications across all promotions should continue to be managed locally by faculties as part of their general financial responsibilities.
9	Reduction in the number of external reviews needed for promotion to Associate Professor or Professor.	Request details for 6 external assessors only and require minimum of 1 national and 2 international. Also, streamline process by seeking external assessors' details at application stage or in advance of interview panel.	Reducing the number of external references will reduce the workload for those requesting them. By requesting the names of the external reviewers in advance, this will streamline the process, aid decision-making for the panel and reduce the time between panel and confirmation of promotion.

Phase 1 (July-September 2023)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	Justification	
10	Reduce staff representation at interview panels for those progressing to Associate Professor.	Review the staffing at interview panels for Associate Professor level, with a view to reducing the number of staff present, to optimism the use of staff time.	By reducing staff representation at interview panels for Associate Professor level, this will reduce the time commitment for those who sit on interview panels. It will also support devolution and provide departments & faculties with a higher degree ownership over the process.
12	Promotions panels to sit annually for all job families and include EDI input (fast track for retention cases to remain)	Change frequency of the university promotion panel (both university and faculty) to annual for all levels. *Allowance for exemption for fast-track for retention cases. EDI input (data) included for every panel meeting across job families.	Promotion panels should sit once per year to review all promotions. This would allow for a clear and consistent timeline to support planning and, in conjunction with other recommendations, better enable clear support and efficiency within the system. It is also recommended that the panel is required to have an EDI representative present, to ensure any decisions made explicitly consider EDI factors.

Phase 2 (September 2023- March 2024)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	Justification	
3	Define the role and criteria of probation for E&R lecturers.	Define the role of probation to determine the probation period for E&R lecturers (with a view of reducing to 2 years). (Subject to changes made on the criteria/matrix).	Whilst not originally in the remit of the group, it became clear through conversations that probation is directly linked to promotion and progression processes. Due to differing views, further work is needed to define what the purpose is for probation for the job families in order to determine the appropriate time period and whether this should be harmonised across families.
6	Simplification of application forms for promotion (and probation)	Align with new criteria and scoring matrix requirements (rec 1 & 2). Digitise application, and support promotion/probation forms to pull information from existing databases. Consider procurement and implementation of new IT system if required for this process.	Having a single form provided to be used across all job families and grades for promotion applications will simplify and reduce confusion in the application process. The form should include a clearly defined template with any free space text boxes accompanied with a word count and clear guidance on what is expected. Ideally, the application form should be digitised and able to pull information from existing data sources, easing the process but also providing an automatic format and a 'single truth'. This may also obviate the need for an additional CV, but during the process of development a judgement needs to be taken on whether this is possible, but if a CV remains a requirement clear guidance should be given on what should be contained in the CV versus the application form to remove duplication.

Phase 3 (April-July 2024)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	Justification	
4	Separate probation from PDP for E&R lecturers	As per (3) above set probation at 2 years to achieve confirmation in post. PDP to focus solely on professional development. Time frame for PDP to remain at 3 years (or earlier for those who can provide sufficient evidence to satisfy promotion criteria).	Probation is about confirmation in post, whereas PDP is about supporting colleagues to progress and achieve promotion. This recommendation seeks to separate the two processes, so that they can focus on their intended purposes most directly.
14	Clearly define process for movement of academic colleagues between job families	Review and update process and guidance to define process and criteria for how colleagues can move between job families.	By updating and reviewing the current guidance, better understanding and use of the guidance will occur. This also links to recommendation 1, if the criteria are more clearly defined and consistent across job families, it will make the process of moving between them easier and more transparent for colleagues.

Phase 4 (2024/2025 academic year)

Rec Number	Proposed Change	
16	Review the current job title market structure when deemed appropriate	We are focused on creating tangible difference by implementing recommendations 1-15, therefore changes to job titles were not deemed a priority, given the scale of changes currently under review and our recent restructure. However, it was noted that our relevance within the sector does need to be regularly considered to ensure we are remaining competitive.

Recommendations Requiring Further Investigation

Rec Number	Recommendation
13	Consider implementation of an additional job family for 'Practice'. (Subject to a review of the impact of recommendations 1 and 2, this is suggested 'for consideration', pending the review outcome).
15	Remove the term "scholarship" from the E&S job family title and better reflect importance across job families in recommendations 1 and 2.

Recommendations not approved

Rec Number	Recommendation
2	Develop and implement a scoring matrix to clearly indicate relative weighting of different criterion, especially important in light of development of new criteria in recommendation 1
11	Devolve promotion decision making for Associate Professor to faculties.

Next Steps

- As the implementation begins of the recommendations over the next 12 months, at various points we may need to consult with academics so please do continue to support us with the project.

- We will also continue to update you, via faculties, weekly bulletin and on the review webpage.