

Recognising Contributions and Expectations within the Academic SDPR Process for the Faculty of Science

Preamble

The development of an effective academic staff development programme is dependent on colleagues feeling that they have a clear sense of their own personal goals and career trajectory, embedded within a supportive environment. To achieve this, the SDPR process needs to be effective, transparent and above all helpful to both the individual and the institution. In this document we state, in very broad terms, what a framework for reasonable expectations would be, mapped on to existing UoB processes and regulations, so as to help develop the SDPR process within the existing agreed framework and to make it as effective as possible within the current regulations. It should be stressed that this is not intended as a departure from current requirements but merely a restating of those principles in a manner which will prove useful for all parties. If there is a clear consensus that this is a reasonable approach, then we can build this into the SDPR process alongside ensuring that the process itself has suitable follow-through and senior support so as to allow support recommendations to be actioned as appropriate. We also consider it desirable to have meaningful conversations regarding promotion to be embedded into the SDPR process, hence we suggest again that an agreed framework for how contributions can be acknowledged and encouraged would be helpful. All of these considerations can and should be captured in fair and reasonable objectives agreed during the SDPR process, with suitable and supportive follow up available.

Please note that we present a series of recommendations regarding the SDPR process itself under separate cover. The purpose of this document and subsequent discussion is to empower staff and managers to reach a reasonable set of both expectations and commitments from managers to support staff moving forward. We would look for outstanding performance in some but not all of the areas outlined below depending on seniority and interests, but stress again that the breadth of contributions from different individuals is both recognised and welcomed. Please also note that the focus on academic staff is not intended in any way to denigrate the importance of staff development of professional services and technical staff; we hope to address these colleagues in an equivalent but bespoke manner in the near future.

Please note that postdoctoral research associates and assistants should have regular developmental (career conversation) meetings with their supervisor and in due course will be considered under separate cover. Academic staff on probation are covered separately by the probation process.

Recognising Contributions and Expectations from Academic Staff within the Faculty of Science

There have been requests for some level of guidance for what would represent a reasonable set of expectations for academic staff, particularly given the wide range of activities that our staff are engaged with and this is set out below.

The full guidance and promotion criteria for each level of activity can be found in [this link](#).

Academic staff on education and research contracts

Research contributions and expectations

The level of expectation for contribution will vary according to seniority as well as the level of emphasis on non-research activities. Typically for a Professorial or Reader (Associate Professor) position, one would expect:

- a steady output of publications of internationally leading quality; the institution is keen to balance quality and quantity and it is appreciated that a lower number of outstanding outputs is preferable to a higher number of less impactful outputs.
- credible attempts made to secure grant funding from a range of sources including research councils and major charities.
- a clear research programme that is being led by the individual concerned or, in the case of research which is intrinsically collaborative (such as modelling or instrument-based research), a clear sense of research leadership within that field.
- supportive management and nurturing of PGR students, postdoctoral researchers and any other early career researchers that fall within the individual's responsibility.
- where appropriate to the subject, active pursuit of research impact and external engagement with stakeholders from academic, industrial, commercial partners and end users.

It is recognised that it is now possible to be promoted to full professorial level via a number of routes, so the expectations must reflect the breadth of the contribution (i.e. if a professorial colleague has a significant leadership responsibility within a Department, this should be taken into account). For less senior positions then the expectations are lowered accordingly, but the same principle applies in terms of taking into consideration whether the primary contribution is research based or whether the individual presents a broad palate of contributions. It is a reasonable expectation that all staff on academic (research and teaching) contracts should be producing a steady output of quality papers, at least some of which they will have led, and can show evidence of serious attempts to generate research income from competitive sources. Again, the magnitude of other contributions will be taken into account when agreeing objectives in SDPR.

Education

Again the level of contribution will vary, depending on both the contribution portfolio of the individual concerned and their seniority. Quality teaching is essential for the future success of the Faculty. It is therefore a reasonable expectation that staff are able to demonstrate, via peer review and student assessment, that they are providing quality education for our students. It is also a reasonable expectation that all staff who are contractually obliged to teach make a reasonable contribution to teaching, regardless of their research activity. It is incumbent on the HOD and /or appraiser to discuss the level of current contribution and what would be a reasonable load moving forward. Staff that are primarily contributing to education within their portfolio would be reasonably expected to take on not only an appropriate teaching load but would also be expected to contribute to teaching leadership and innovation, depending on their seniority. Similarly, those staff who are clearly and consistently demonstrating high research activity and effectiveness can expect to have their teaching load discussed at SDPR in the context of Recognising their most effective contribution to the institution.

Institutional Citizenship

All staff are expected to contribute to a working environment that is inclusive, respectful and welcoming of diversity. It is a reasonable expectation that as staff become more senior they are willing to assume managerial responsibilities within the Department, although enabling and managerial responsibilities within the institution should also be taken into account. These may range from module leadership through to the assumption of positions of defined responsibility such as HOD, associate director positions or contributing to key committees and activities within the Department, Faculty and/or UoB. It is incumbent on the HOD and/or appraiser to discuss how someone wishing to be considered for promotion or rebanding can have the opportunity to develop their contribution in this direction so as to maximise their chances of success. The level of anticipated contribution will be dependent on seniority and the breadth of the existing portfolio of activities, but it is reasonable to expect all academic staff to assume some level of responsibility for the running of the Department or university.

Enterprise and External Engagement (Outreach)

The contribution to knowledge transfer can vary greatly and may include numerous activities such as development of a company or participation in external organisations through to one-off activities such as participation in public awareness events. In addition, outreach is recognised as being extremely important for the reputation and mission of the institution and HODs are being encouraged to actively promote and support such activities in the context of other commitments. Such activities may include knowledge dissemination, equality and diversity, public understanding of science and contribution to professional and learned bodies. Staff will be encouraged and supported in having elements of this type of activity in their contribution portfolio.

Academic staff on research only contracts

The Faculty has a significant population of academic staff who are on research contracts. The activities of these staff will to quite a large extent be determined by the research project or activities on which they are engaged, and all contractual obligations must be fully respected. Nevertheless, the personal development of these staff must not be forgotten, particularly in terms of early career researchers who will need to build up a portfolio of experience so as to allow them to be fully competitive for their next stage of development. On that basis, the provision of opportunities for personal development is a vital responsibility of the HOD and appraiser/line manager. It should be emphasised that the institution has no right to insist that any such individual participate in teaching or citizenship/outreach activities, but by the same token it would be inappropriate to not at least discuss whether any such opportunities would be desirable to the individual concerned, with a view to such experiential opportunities being provided, if possible, within the confines of contractual obligations. It should be emphasised that this should be a development opportunity and not a means of relieving full time academic staff of their duties (particularly the supervisor).

The above applies to staff on academic contracts rather than postdoctoral research assistants and associates; again, we intend to develop similar support structures for this very important section of our community in the near future and suggest that the Career Conversation route be adopted for these individuals for the time being.

Academic staff on education only contracts

The Faculty has a sizeable population of staff who are on teaching only contracts and their contribution, as well as their requirements for career progression and reward, are very much recognised. Their contracts may range from full time to fractional FTE depending on their activities, with many being on partial secondment from other positions. We see no reason to treat any such individuals differently from each other as anyone employed by the UoB deserves the opportunity to develop. The level of expectation and contribution will nevertheless vary, with some having roles which are delivery facing while others are contributing invaluable educational leadership and/or innovation. The balance of delivery, innovation and leadership will inevitably be the subject of discussion during the SDPR and once again it would be inappropriate to be too prescriptive in this document. That said, two important principles need to be emphasised. The first is that the Faculty will support promotion and personal development for all such individuals, but it is recognised that promotion in particular may be dependent on teaching staff demonstrating innovation and leadership and hence staff should typically be offered opportunities for such activities if they have ambitions for further progression (this requirement is self-evident from the promotions criteria outlined in the link mentioned above). Secondly, teaching only staff may have a vital role to play not only in institutional citizenship but also in outreach. Again, discussion of such contributions in SDPR is encouraged and, as long as core activities are being met, should be actively considered within the objective setting process.