



University of South Australia
Human Resources Unit

Review of Academic Promotion Policy

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Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj has commissioned a review of the University's Academic Promotion Policy. The Review will be conducted in accordance with the Guidelines for Nominated and Vice Chancellor's reviews.

Background and Purpose

A comparison of academic promotion policy and procedures across the sector indicates a high degree of uniformity. This is hardly surprising given universities' desire to provide some level of consistency in recognising standards of excellence across a globally mobile academy. However, there are enough differences in approach between institutions to offer some ideas for new ways of doing things and, potentially, doing them better. Over the past five years, a number of institutions have undertaken extensive reviews of promotion policy to ensure their practices accommodate changes in the academic role, are aligned with their strategic objectives, address equity concerns, aid the recruitment and retention of high performing academic staff, and are as efficient and effective as possible in a highly competitive environment.

The last major review of the University's Academic Promotion Policy was conducted in 2000/2001.¹ While minor amendments have been made to the Policy,² it is timely to undertake a formal review of the whole framework for academic promotion to test whether it:

- is informed by best practice in Australia and overseas
- has the capacity to address the current and future needs of the academic community and the institution.

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Review is:

1. to ascertain whether the University's Academic Promotion Policy and practices:
 - reflect best practice in the higher education sector, nationally and internationally
 - support UniSA's endeavours to attract, reward and retain staff to achieve its strategic goals expressed in statements such as Horizon 2020 and corporate plans
 - are sufficiently flexible to enable UniSA to respond to changing circumstances
 - employ processes and procedures that are streamlined, efficient and effective.
2. to recommend, if applicable, changes and improvements to the Academic Promotion Policy and practices.

The Policy and practices related to Academic Promotion at UniSA are articulated in the following key documents:

- [Academic Promotion Policy No: HR-26.3](#)

¹ New policy adopted 18 June 2002 after a review spanning 2000/2001.

² In 2008, changes were made to the process to allow promotion committees to change an applicant's nominated level of performance if the committee determine it would advantage the applicant's case for promotion.

- [Information for academic staff applying for promotion](#)
- [Equity information for academic promotion for applicants](#)

The scope of the Review covers promotion to:

- Lecturer Level B/Research Fellow
- Senior Lecturer Level C/Senior Research Fellow
- Associate Professor Level D/Associate Research Professor
- Professor Level E/Research Professor.

Review process

Stage 1

The Human Resources Unit has undertaken preliminary work as the basis for a review of the Academic Promotion Policy. This included:

- benchmarking academic promotion at UniSA against policy and procedures across the Higher Education sector
- observation of divisional promotion committees and the senior promotions committee, along with interviews/discussion with committee members
- analysing relevant literature and the focus of similar reviews in other universities
- discussion on academic promotion at the Workforce Strategy Advisory Group, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Høj
- individual discussions with the Deputy Vice Chancellors and each of the Division Pro Vice Chancellors.

This work has identified five areas as priorities for the review:

1. the Framework for Promotion, namely; criteria for promotion, merit, areas of contribution and performance descriptors
2. eligibility requirements
3. support and guidance to staff
4. promotion committees
5. application procedures and administration of the Academic Promotion process.

Stage 2

Stage 2 will involve a closer and more in-depth examination of the policy framework and practices at UniSA with a focus on the five priority areas. In addition, the consultation in stage 1 confirmed that, while examination of academic career structures is out of scope for the review, there is an interest in considering whether there is capacity to create new steps and stages in the level E classification.³

A panel of senior academic staff, external and internal to UniSA and with firsthand knowledge of promotion processes, will oversee this stage of the review.

The panel membership is currently being finalised.

Information will be gathered from a range of sources including:

- individuals and stakeholder groups through written submission, interviews and focus group discussion with the Review Panel

³ UniSA has already taken steps toward this with the designation of Laureate Professor.

- quantitative and qualitative data relevant to Academic Promotion at UniSA
- further benchmarking against other universities.

The review panel will report its findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.

Subsequent policy changes arising from the review of UniSA's Academic Promotion Policy and practices will be subject to a separate process of development and consultation.

Submissions to the Review Panel

Staff are invited to submit a written submission addressing the Terms of Reference and the priority areas for the review. Submissions should be forwarded by email to the Executive Officer to the Academic Promotion Review: [Kath Higgins](#), Senior Consultant: Organisation Development. Submissions are due by Friday 29 July.

Management and administration of the Review of Academic Promotion

The Review will be managed and administered by the Human Resources Unit. Any enquiries should be directed to Kath Higgins, Senior Consultant: Organisation Development, phone 22731, email: kath.higgins@unisa.edu.au