



**UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK**

**O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H**

**Policy and Procedures for Progression  
Across the Merit Bar**

**Approved by Governing Authority 23 February 2018**

**Amended by Governing Authority 8 September 2021**

## **A. POLICY**

### **1. Purpose of Policy**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to specify the conditions and general procedures for progression from Lecturer below the bar to Lecturer above the bar.
- 1.2 Progression across the merit bar is not competitive and will be based on individual performance assessed against the criteria and benchmarks set out below, relative to disciplinary norms.
- 1.3 This policy will enable the University to recognise and develop the best talent available to the organisation so that the University will be in a position to ensure that the holders of academic posts have appropriate expertise.

### **2. Policy Statement**

- 2.1 The University is committed to a free and open intellectual atmosphere.
- 2.2 Progression across the merit bar may be granted to Lecturers below the bar who demonstrate the following levels of performance for this stage of career:
  - Excellent scholarship and research output;
  - Excellent teaching and curriculum development;
  - Satisfactory service to the University and the wider community.
- 2.3 This policy covers progression of Lecturer below the bar to Lecturer above the bar for academic staff (lecturer below the bar) that are not on tenure track contracts.
- 2.4 The overall objective of the policy is to develop and progress academic staff on the basis of individual performance, achievement and merit.
- 2.5 Staff progressing to lecturer above the bar will progress on the basis of their current contract and terms and conditions of employment, e.g. multi-annual, specific purpose or fixed-term contracts. Staff on specific purpose or fixed-term contracts will not have an entitlement to a contract of indefinite duration or multi-annual contract on the basis of progressing across the merit bar.

### **3. Equality of Opportunity**

- 3.1 The University of Limerick is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to selection on merit. Consequently, the policy and procedures for progression across the merit bar will be equitable and transparent and will seek to treat people in similar circumstances equally and fairly.
- 3.2 Disability, gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief or lack of religious belief, age, race or membership of the traveller community will not be a barrier to achieving progression across the merit bar.

#### **4. Frequency of Applications**

4.1 A Lecturer below the bar may apply for progression across the merit bar.

#### **5. University Review Committee**

5.1 A University Review Committee will be convened each year to consider applications for progression across the merit bar.

5.2 Members of the University Review Committee must be at or above the level of Senior Lecturer.

5.3 The University Review Committee will comprise:

- Vice President Academic & Student Engagement (Chair);
- Vice President Research;
- Faculty Deans;
- One nominee of each Faculty Board. In addition, each Faculty will be required to nominate an alternate;
- Two external academics nominated by the Vice President Academic & Student Engagement;
- One member of Governing Authority (non-voting) who is not an employee or student of the University.

A representative of the Human Resources (HR) Division will attend committee meetings.

5.4 In the event of a member of the University Review Committee becoming unavailable, the Vice President Academic & Student Engagement (VPA&S) or his/her nominee may nominate a replacement or determine whether or not the review process should proceed.

5.5 When nominating/appointing members to the University Review Committee, due regard will be given to the requirement for gender balance (minimum 40%). To ensure gender balance on the Committee, the VPA&S may co-opt additional members (internal or external) to the Committee.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

#### **6. Eligibility**

6.1 Lecturers below the bar are eligible for consideration for progression across the merit bar.

## 7. Criteria

- 7.1 In considering the candidature of applicants for progression across the merit bar, candidates will be assessed under each of the following three broad headings:
- Scholarship and research output;
  - Teaching and curriculum development;
  - Service to the University and the wider community.
- 7.2 Each criterion is assessed and candidates should note that in assessing applications, both qualitative and quantitative measures will be applied. Candidates will be expected to achieve the aforementioned levels of performance for this stage of career under each criterion (2.2).

## 8. Process

- 8.1 The assessment process will be conducted annually.
- 8.2 The HR Division will invite applications from all Lecturers below the bar. All those expressing an interest in applying will be requested to submit an application form and supporting documentation.
- 8.3 The supporting documentation will include a Portfolio (Form HRF011) showing:
- A. Evidence of scholarship and research output (please refer to HRF011), including actual or pending publications or equivalent as appropriate to your discipline. (If a book is being tendered as a publication, one copy will suffice) Evidence of acceptance will be required in the case of pending publications;
  - B. Evidence of high quality teaching as demonstrated in your teaching portfolio (please refer to HRF011). Evidence may include; teaching philosophy, teaching performance and effectiveness, student evaluation of teaching (SET), assessment and examination of student learning and professional development, past, present and future, and any other evidence the candidate deems appropriate;
  - C. Evidence of service to the University and the wider community (please refer to HRF011).
- 8.4 Applications must be supported by one complete academic reference from a referee who is familiar with the candidate's work **(refer to 8.9)**.
- 8.5 Applications must be supported by one report (using the official template) from an external assessor, nominated by the Dean, who is a recognised expert in the general discipline of the applicant, but has not published with, mentored as a PhD or postdoctoral supervisor or worked with the candidate as a collaborator **(refer to 8.8)**.
- 8.6 Candidates will be notified of the closing date for the receipt of applications.

- 8.7 The application form should be submitted electronically. Supporting documentation may be submitted electronically or in hard copy.
- 8.8 Deans are required to ensure that the external assessor reports are submitted in confidence directly to the HR Division. These may be submitted electronically or in hard copy and must be submitted by the closing date and time for receipt of applications.
- 8.9 Candidates are required to ensure that his/her referee submits his/her reference in confidence directly to the HR Division. These may be submitted electronically or in hard copy and must be submitted by the closing date and time for receipt of applications.
- 8.10 Any or all of the academic referees/external assessors may be consulted, as may other appropriate academic referees. In the latter case, the candidate will be notified in advance of the names of the referees to be consulted.
- 8.11 The Head of Department/Dean will be invited to review the candidate's application for progression across the merit bar and will verify in writing to the University Review Committee the accuracy of the application against the criteria outlined above.
- 8.12 The accuracy of information given in the application must be verifiable against the University's information systems, e.g. research database, class schedules.
- 8.13 The University Review Committee will convene to review the applications. The Committee will decide on which candidates qualify for progression across the merit bar and which do not.
- 8.14 The HR Division will forward the recommendations of the Committee to the Governing Authority for ratification.

## **9. Feedback**

- 9.1 Where progression across the merit bar is not recommended, the candidate will be informed of the decision in writing within two weeks. Subsequently, candidates may seek a meeting with the Dean to discuss the result of his/her application. Candidates may seek his/her individual results from HR.
- 9.2 Candidates may also choose to discuss appropriate staff development requirements with his/her Head of Department.

## **10. Review**

- 10.1 A candidate may request the Governing Authority to review a recommendation of a University Review Committee on grounds of manifest departure from this policy and procedures, which affected the outcome for the candidate.

- 10.2 To seek such a review the candidate will indicate in writing to the Corporate Secretary his/her intention to seek a review within five (5) working days of the date of the notification letter advising applicants of the outcome of their application. All recommendations for progression across the merit bar submitted to Governing Authority must take account of the timeframe above in order to facilitate a review if required.
- 10.3 The candidate will make a written submission setting out the entire grounds for his/her review request to the Corporate Secretary within twenty (20) working days of the date of the notification letter advising applicants of the outcome of their application.
- 10.4 Upon notification of a request for a review, the Governing Authority will appoint a Review Committee comprising three of its members (none of whom will be a senior officer of the University), one of whom will chair the Committee. The members of the Committee will exclude themselves from a Governing Authority decision on a progression across the merit bar that has been subject to a review by them.
- 10.5 The Review Committee, if satisfied the application falls within the terms of the review as set out above will determine the conduct of the review. Any such review will be completed within twenty (20) working days. The reasoned determination of the Review Committee will be submitted to Governing Authority and will be provided subsequently to the candidate.
- 10.6 Following receipt of the determination of the Review Committee, the Governing Authority will decide whether or not to approve a progression across the merit bar and its decision on this matter is final.
- 10.7 Subject to any statutory or other legal remedy available to the candidates, the result of this review will be final. It will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Division to ensure that no employee shall be subsequently disadvantaged or victimised for exercising their right to seek a review.

## **11. Policy Review**

- 11.1 This policy and procedures will be reviewed at a minimum of every three years.