

Preparing and applying for promotion in a timely manner

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When is the right time to apply?

- Am I ready? Will I seem too pushy?
- How will I feel if I am not promoted?
- Will it hurt my chances if I apply “too soon”?
- How will I feel if someone that I think I outperform gets promoted before me?

If you decide not to apply, make it a deliberate, evidence-based decision; don't just fail to get around to it!

What the data tells us

Steps to promotion

Assessors of promotion applications are looking for evidence that you have satisfied the criteria for the promotion you are seeking.

So:

Step 1: Find out what the criteria are

Step 2: Do the work to satisfy the criteria

Step 3: Write a document that explains how you have satisfied the criteria

Step 1: What are the criteria?

- Get your university policy
- Think about your achievements relative to the criteria
- Talk to your line manager and/or a mentor about how to interpret the criteria

Do this when you are not too busy or stressed

Step 1: What are the criteria?

- Get your university policy
- Think about your achievements relative to the criteria
- Talk to your line manager and/or a mentor about how to interpret the criteria
- Put together a bare bones case
- Talk again to your line manager to identify gaps in your achievements

This can be done years in advance

Step 2: Working towards satisfying the criteria

Make a plan, perhaps for the next 3-5 years

- Think explicitly about how you will fill gaps and develop your teaching and research
- Think about how you can find opportunities for impactful and interesting service

Keep detailed records of your progress

Elements of a plan - Teaching

Include your opportunities to demonstrate

- competence in teaching delivery
- reflective practice and teaching improvement
- supervision of research projects
- professional development in teaching
- contributions to curriculum development
- leadership in teaching

Elements of a plan - Research

When will you have time to write those papers?

How will you demonstrate

- quality of research outputs,
- impact of research,
- collaborations and networks,
- contributions to research environment,
- leadership in research?

Put it in the plan!

Elements of a plan – “Service”

- You will be given more “opportunities” for service than you need/want
- As you demonstrate competence and more independence, you will be given chances for more interesting roles
- Think about the type of service you enjoy and aim for that
- Protect your time from pointless service, esp in the early stages of your career

What does an application look like?

Usually consists of a summary of a few pages supported by lists (of courses taught, papers published, supervision, presentations, etc)

Most institutions have thresholds for promotion, usually either

- numerical targets (e.g., 20 publications, 3 PhD supervisions, 2 major grants awarded), or
- qualitative criteria (e.g., excellence in teaching, distinction in research)

Evidence for quality in teaching

Teaching evidence often has a large quantitative component

- Courses taught and numbers of enrolments
- Student evaluations of teaching

You may be asked for qualitative evidence

- Reflective narrative (“teaching philosophy”)
- Peer review and your responses
- Involvement in professional development

Evidence for impact in teaching

- For established courses, how did you improve them?
- For courses you developed, have they become core courses in a programme?
- Unsolicited anecdotal evidence from students can carry weight

Evidence for quality in research

Your close colleagues won't necessarily be the ones assessing your application.

- Explain what author order means in your field
- Explain the importance of different types of research output and venues
- Outline norms for paper length, number of authors, etc.
- If permitted, write a (brief) narrative about your contributions to any paper or project

Evidence for impact in research

- Who is interested in your work? What invitations have you had to present or collaborate?
- What are the important conferences and journals for your work, and why? Which invitations are prestigious?
- Do you have a reputation in the field that is reflected in invitations to referee, edit, write review articles, assess grant applications?

Evidence for impact in service

- What did you do? What were the duties or responsibilities? When did you do it?
- What difference did your contribution make?
- Was this a leadership role?

Remember that people on promotions committees generally have large service roles.
Do not inflate your service contributions.

Step 3: Writing the application

- Start early (e.g., 6 months in advance)
- Address the criteria explicitly
- Pitch your application to those who will make a decision (they will not usually be your close colleagues)
- Get feedback early – from a variety of different people
- Ask to see a successful application

Step 3: Writing the application

- Don't embellish your record or make claims that might be disputed.
- Pay attention to formatting (consistent fonts, white space, removing instructions)
- Don't be repetitive and don't ramble
- Stick to word and page limits
- Summarise complex information. Put the detail in an Appendix, if allowed

What to say about parental leave?

- Don't be afraid to say you took a break!
- Do the maths for the committee (e.g., “I took two periods of parental leave of six months each followed by 2 years of 0.5FTE each time. My average FTE for the years 2020-2024 was 0.4FTE.”)
- Be explicit (e.g., “My opportunities for travel were limited in the period 2010-2020 due to caring responsibilities, and so I prioritized”)

When the outcome is known

If you are successful:

- Celebrate!
- Then think about the next promotion and make a plan

If you are unsuccessful:

- seek advice about what the gaps in your application were
- Then make a plan to try again

GOOD LUCK!