

Academic Promotions FAQ

What are the timescales for academic promotions 2026?

Applications will open w/c 13th July and will be open until the end of September 2026. A longer timeline for applications recognises that the application window coincides with the summer holiday period.

School/Institute, faculty panels and the Academic Promotions Group (APG) will have concluded decision making and ratification by early December 2026. Decisions will be communicated in early December 2026, with implementation of any changes to pay in December 2026 payroll. Any changes to pay resulting from a promotion will be effective from 1st October 2026, as this is 12 months from the date of implementing promotion outcomes from the last promotions cycle in 2025.

Why has academic promotions opened in July?

A communication was shared in January 2026 that an academic led academic promotions task and finish group (APTFG) would be established to review the academic promotions framework and process, to ensure that these are fit for purpose and supportive of applicants as well as aligned with delivery of excellence and contributing to the delivery of Strategy 2030 objectives.

The AGTFG met between March and June 2026, and following conclusion of the group's work, processes have been updated, providing for a launch in July.

The group considered a range of issues including:

- Increased emphasis on impact and innovation in research funding, and internal developments including increasing external partnerships.
- Requirement for clarity between and within the academic careers framework and promotion guidance to make efficient use of staff time and reduce the risk of perceived issues with coherence, transparency and fairness of academic promotion.
- Aligning the academic career framework with institutional SPRE ahead of REF2029.
- Optimising the academic promotions cycle to support effective staff development on an ongoing basis.

Who was involved in the review and what did they find?

The APTFG was chaired by the Faculty Vice President for HSS and supported in Deputy Chair by the Chief Operations Officer. The APTFG comprised six Heads of School/Directors of Institute/DVP drawn equally from across QM's Faculties, supported by the Director and Assistant Director HR. The group reviewed the Academic Careers Framework and process to identify recommendations that support consistency and fairness in the promotions process University wide, across discipline and contract type and in how impact and outcomes are assessed, demonstrated and calibrated – with the intent of incentivising and rewarding academic excellence.

The group reviewed the Academic Careers Framework (ACF) and the associated Promotions Guidance, in the context of their own multi-disciplinary experience, and:

- Benchmarked the ACF against other frameworks across the sector
- Shared experience of implementing current ACF and Guidance in practice

- Engaged via the Chair with senior stakeholders

The APTFG found that the Academic Careers Framework was broadly strategically aligned, but proposed revisions to increase clarity and adapt to changes in the external environment and strategic focus, particularly around innovation. APTFG found that guidance documentation around the Promotions Process was fundamentally sound but needed revision to improve clarity and consistent implementation and to support applicants and panel members.

What has changed?

The changes are additive and clarificatory and therefore will not result in any detriment to applicants preparing to apply.

Academic career framework

The group identified a small number of updates to the ACF as outlined below:

- Renamed 'Research' to 'Research and Innovation' and included examples of developing, delivering, and leading innovation at all career stages
- Renamed 'Enterprise and External Engagement' as 'Knowledge Exchange and Engaging with External Partners' and ensured that criteria in this Area of Contribution reflect the range of external engagement
- Ensured that criteria in all Areas of Contribution emphasise demonstration of outcome and effect, not just of activity undertaken, so that these are fully aligned with the expectations articulated in promotions policy documentation
- Clarified language to avoid using 'impact' other than in the research impact context
- Clarified that 'threshold' requirements are the minimum performance level expected at that career stage, not the level that has to be demonstrated to achieve promotion
- Clarified that output in different Areas of Contribution will be judged against time allocated to them in workload models or workplans

Promotions Process:

Following the end of a promotions process, Faculty Executives will *review EDI data* on the last promotions cycle and the implementation of any agreed actions relating to promotions, and agree future actions for the upcoming cycle. At the same time, information will be shared of all academics eligible for promotion with Heads of School/Director of Institute, so that they can align promotion conversations with the opening of the annual appraisal round. Applicants identified and approached at this stage will have more time to prepare the best possible application ahead of the formal opening of the promotions round.

Feedback needs to be more clearly defined. Pre-submission engagement with and feedback from Heads of School or other senior colleagues is encouraged. There were, however, examples of a wide range of practice in terms of when feedback on outcome occurs, and whether applicants were able to revise application documents after School/Institute Promotion Groups. These were well-intentioned, and not explicitly prohibited in previous guidance, but could be misaligned with the stated purpose and responsibilities of these Promotion Groups, while inconsistency in practice and experience did not support trust in the principle of fairness for the process. They also increase the risk of misaligned feedback, which is unfair on unsuccessful applicants. In future the only feedback an applicant receives after they have submitted their application will be the Head of School statement on behalf of the School Promotion Group,

from which they can write their Applicant Response. No post-submission amendment of the application will be permitted. All other feedback will only be given after the University Academic Promotion Group has confirmed promotion decisions.

To align application documentation with the promotions process, and improve the quality of feedback to applicants, the 'partially met' tick box will be removed from the School/Institute assessment of the application.

Promotions Guidance

The promotions guidance had become long, repetitive and unwieldy – reflecting multiple additions since its initial creation which had made it hard for applicants and panel members to parse. The APTFG has coordinated the production of three new documents, which can be cross-referenced with each other as well as with the ACF. The first lays out process and governance – it acts as the more formal explanation of the different stages in the promotion process, how applications are assessed and how consistency, fairness and transparency is maintained. The second provides guidance for panel members, focussing on clarifying their responsibilities and advising on required and best practice. The third provides applicants with guidance on the process, with the aim of supporting applicants to submit the best possible application. Within each of these documents, unnecessary repetition has been removed, improving clarity and consistency, and alignment with the revised ACF.

What has not changed?

The unwieldy nature of the previous promotions' guidance risked obscuring two important elements of the process. Both were explained in the guidance, but in locations that mean that they were possible to miss. These elements have not changed, but are clearer in the revised guidance:

First, to be successful, applicants must demonstrate to panel members that they have achieved excellence in all three aspects of delivery, development and leadership in each of their Areas of Contribution. Applicants who do not demonstrate excellence in delivery, development and leadership in each of their Areas of Contribution should not be considered for promotion. Second, School/Institute Groups and Faculty Panels have a responsibility to agree a decision on each applicant. Where they cannot agree, the default is not to promote.

In both cases, the changes to layout and articulation of documents will support Schools and institutes in taking more ownership of the assessment of excellence in their own disciplinary areas. Both previous and revised guidance are very clear that decisions about what 'excellence' means are ultimately discipline-specific, and dependent on academic expertise. The revised guidance for panellists emphasises that this ownership comes with the responsibility of agreeing clear judgements.

There has been no change made to the special circumstances process, and to the EDI requirements/considerations within decision making panels.

What else did the group consider?

Improvements in feedback – training and development will be devised to support the delivery of clear, constructive feedback at the most appropriate time, including where applications have not been successful.

Areas for future review – while not part of APTFG remit, the group have advised that in future the promotions process would benefit from integration of the Academic Career Framework more systematically with academic probations and appraisals. This will be considered in future years.

What will be the timings and process going forwards for Academic Promotions?

The timeline of the next 3 academic promotions cycles will move to:

- Realign with the academic year (rather than calendar year)
- Provide time for full feedback/review of outcomes with faculty panels at the end of each promotion cycle
- Build in sharing of information on staff eligible for promotion ahead of the promotions round and in line with the appraisal window to support preparation and development

The next (subsequent) academic promotions round will open in February 2027 as a step towards realigning the promotions process with the academic year, following the review period. Academic promotions will open for applications for the 2027/2028 academic year in November 2027.

What are the benefits of the changes made?

The ACF will better match developments in sectoral and external funding/policy landscape and better supports our institutional REF SPRE submission. The ACF is clearer and more consistent for applicants.

Changes to timeline and EDI reporting better support equality, diversity and inclusion in academic promotion, and are aligned with appraisal as another aspect of staff development as well as supporting a fairer and more consistent treatment of applicants.

Participants in the promotion process as decision-makers are better supported to clearly understand their responsibilities, to make most effective use of their time, and apply existing criteria consistently. Schools/institutes are supported to take more coherent and consistent ownership of and accountability for excellence across the institution.

What else do I need to know?

The promotions application form has been updated, and the form will be easier to complete, routing applicants to complete relevant sections based on career family. Whilst all relevant publications should be listed, you may wish to highlight those that have been made since your last promotion application, or since joining QMUL if you have not applied for promotion previously within QMUL.

Applicants will also be asked to identify in application narratives where there has been shared contribution, so that collaboration and impacts associated with this are clear.

What happens next?

Briefing sessions will open for applicants from July and will run through the application period up to and including dates in September – dates and details will be available on the [Academic Promotions pages on Connected](#).