



Guideline: Assessing achievement relative to opportunity

Purpose

To provide guidance to applicants and promotion committees in relation to assessing achievements relative to opportunity.

Definitions

Achievements relative to opportunity: Assessing achievements relative to opportunity involves evaluating the quality and impact of the staff member's achievement having regard to the applicant's career stage and trajectory and taking into consideration the impact of relevant personal circumstances. This supports appropriate evaluation of achievements in relation to productivity, the ability to participate in certain types of activities, and the consistency of activities or output over the period of consideration.

The relevant personal circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- family responsibilities (e.g. child rearing, elder care, illness of a partner/dependent);
- family or caring responsibilities (e.g. parental leave, primary carer's leave, single parent, elder care, ill-health or injury of a partner/dependent);
- a temporary or permanent disability;
- significant or traumatic events or circumstances such as a relationship breakdown, death in the family or domestic violence;
- periods of part time work;
- relevant cultural expectations or circumstances;
- personal ill-health or injury; and/or
- any other relevant personal circumstances identified by the applicant.

Period of consideration: the whole of career in accordance with the academic promotion procedure.

Guideline

Introduction

1. Academic promotion at ANU is undertaken in accordance with the provisions within the University's academic promotion policy and procedure.
2. Academic promotion recognises achievement relative to opportunity, and promotion committees appropriately evaluate a staff member's achievements relative to the personal circumstances outlined in their promotion application.
3. Achievement relative to opportunity is not about providing 'special consideration' or expecting lesser standards of performance, but involves promotion committees appropriately assessing what the staff member has achieved given their personal circumstances over the period of consideration.
4. Applicants applying for academic promotion are encouraged to articulate their relevant personal circumstances in their promotion application to enable the assessment of their achievements relative to opportunity.

Relative to opportunity statement

5. It is recommended that the relative to opportunity statement includes the following information:
 - a. a quantitative indication of the period/s impacted by the relevant personal circumstances; and/or
 - b. a qualitative assessment of the impact of these personal circumstances on their productivity, their ability to participate in certain types of activities, and the consistency of activities or output over the period of consideration. This includes an outline of the applicant's career history and trajectory in light of their personal circumstances and experiences.
6. The impact of these personal circumstances is evident in the following areas:
 - publication record;
 - number of classes taught;
 - fieldwork activities;
 - conference and seminar participation, or attendance in other opportunities in different geographical locations;
 - maintaining networks of research contacts and research collaborations;
 - track record of securing funding;
 - modified research methodology;

- supervision of staff or students;
- committee, working party or accreditation panel membership; or
- any other activity or output specified in the [education, research and service indicators for promotion](#).

7. The relative to opportunity statement is provided to the promotion committee, but is excluded from the documentation provided to referees.

Confidential relative to opportunity statement

8. Where an applicant has exceptional personal circumstances that they wish to keep confidential from the promotion committee, the applicant can contact the Director – Human Resources about providing a confidential relative to opportunity statement.
9. The Director – Human Resources will provide advice directly to the Chair of the promotion committee specifically in relation to the impact of the applicant’s personal circumstances during the period of consideration, but will not provide detail about the specific circumstances or experiences.

Assessing relative to opportunity

10. Where the promotion application includes a statement of achievement relative to opportunity, the promotion committee will not use a formula or calculation to proportionally reduce or discount the period impacted by personal circumstances.
11. The promotion committee evaluates and gives consideration to the impact of the applicant’s personal circumstances as part of their holistic assessment of the promotion case. This includes consideration of the following; the:
- a. quality and impact of achievements, rather than the quantity, rate or breadth;
 - b. stage of the applicant’s career and the applicant’s career trajectory;
 - c. impact of personal circumstances over the period of assessment; and
 - d. ongoing effects on productivity and achievement beyond the period directly impacted by the applicant’s personal circumstances.
12. The impact of an applicant’s personal circumstances is evident in the following areas:
- publication record;
 - number of classes taught;
 - fieldwork activities;
 - conference and seminar participation, or attendance in other opportunities in different geographical locations;
 - maintaining networks of research contacts and research collaborations;

- track record of securing funding;
- modified research methodology;
- supervision of staff or students;
- committee, working party or accreditation panel membership; or
- any other activity or output that may in the [education, research and service indicators for promotion](#).

Examples for assessing relative to opportunity

13. A staff member returns to work after paid parental leave, and notes that their research productivity had also declined in the six-month period after this leave. In their promotion application a few years later, the parental leave and the six-month period following this leave is noted. The promotion committee takes these periods into account when assessing the staff member's overall achievements and output in the period of consideration.
14. A single parent of a child with both a disability and a chronic health condition and is limited in their capacity to travel to attend and present at international conferences. In their promotion application, the staff member lists a small but appropriate number of publications in good quality journals and has a high citation rate. When being assessed for promotion, the promotion committee determines that the applicant has demonstrated the appropriate quality and impact of publications notwithstanding the relatively lower output of conference presentations.
15. A staff member experienced a significant illness (i.e. cancer) for two of the six years since their last promotion. When assessing their case for promotion, the promotion committee acknowledges that the staff member has demonstrated performance of a requisite quality over the six-year period of consideration, notwithstanding lower output during the two years of ill-health.
16. A staff member experienced a marital breakdown resulting in a prolonged custody dispute of their two children. In their promotion application, the staff member acknowledges a reduced research and publication output over the two-year period, as well as a decreased capacity to maintain their previously strong online and media presence. Given the nature of the personal circumstances, the promotion committee considers the impact of the personal circumstances over an extended period that not only includes, but is subsequent to the two-year period noted by the staff member. The promotion committee considers that the quality and impact of achievements and output, rather than the breadth or quantity, and determines these meet the appropriate level to warrant promotion.

17. A staff member has caring responsibilities for an ailing parent over a 12-month period, which has resulted in frequent instances of carer's leave. In their promotion application, the staff member advises that one impact of these circumstances has been a limited capacity to undertake fieldwork. This has resulted in a change to their work methodology by utilising readily available datasets. The promotion committee acknowledges that the staff member would be unable to prepare their own datasets and determines that despite this, they have demonstrated an appropriate quality and impact of research to warrant promotion.

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