

Motion: Academic Promotions Procedure

This branch notes:

- that academic promotions were suspended last year and that their reintroduction is to be welcomed;
- that the University reintroduced academic promotions using substantially revised benchmarks without a phased transition period;
- that the compressed timetable of the process has increased pressure on both applicants and staff serving on panels;
- that staff were required to prepare applications without successful models and against criteria which Schools and applicants themselves did not yet fully understand;
- that implementation by School Promotion Panels (SPPs) has varied significantly across the institution, producing inconsistent standards and outcomes, including the application in some Schools of evidential thresholds exceeding those set out in University guidance;
- that members have reported inconsistent, vague, and at times contradictory feedback from SPPs, frequently offering little practical guidance for future applications or meaningful support to help staff meet the revised expectations;
- that feedback has on occasion been released at inappropriate times, including weekends and the start of the Easter Vacation;
- that some members have expressed concerns about the possible use of generative AI in drafting promotion feedback, raising serious questions about confidentiality, accountability, and whether applications received proper individual consideration;
- that, despite these difficulties, there is currently no formal mechanism through which applicants can challenge factual inaccuracies or respond to problematic feedback, with complaints only possible at the conclusion of the process and handled by the same structures that produced the original decisions;
- that the new procedure continues to disadvantage ECR staff who have often gained valuable skills and experience on fixed-term contracts prior to open-ended employment at Cardiff.

This branch believes:

- that the University has implemented a major change to academic career progression without adequate transitional arrangements, giving staff insufficient time to adjust to substantially revised expectations;
- that these revised benchmarks appear to construct an increasingly narrow model of the “Cardiff Academic”, encouraging conformity to a managerial ideal rather than recognising the diversity of academic careers, disciplines, workloads, and institutional contributions;
- that the uneven operation of SPPs has undermined confidence in the integrity and fairness of the promotions process, damaging staff wellbeing, morale, and trust in institutional leadership;

- that the current procedure risks creating a two-tier University, separating those promoted under earlier and less demanding expectations from staff now struggling to meet substantially revised criteria;
- that in so doing, the new procedure risks reproducing existing inequalities, including those relating to workload allocation, precarity, caring responsibilities, disability, race, and gender;
- that staff cannot reasonably be expected to undertake ever-increasing administrative, citizenship, pastoral, and managerial responsibilities while simultaneously meeting heightened expectations across all promotion benchmarks;
- that failures in the promotions process risk creating further workload and administrative pressures by discouraging staff from undertaking essential leadership, citizenship, and managerial roles that are insufficiently recognised within the promotions framework.

This branch resolves:

- to demand publication of anonymised promotions data, broken down by School, grade, protected characteristics where practicable, and progression through each stage of the process;
- to seek formal staff and trade union representation on any review of the promotions procedure;
- to campaign for a formal mechanism enabling applicants to correct factual inaccuracies and challenge procedurally flawed feedback;
- to campaign for an independent appeals process sitting outside the existing promotions framework;
- to survey members regarding their experiences of the 2026 promotions round and publicise the findings;
- to raise these concerns formally through all appropriate industrial relations channels.