

RESEARCH COUNCILS' INDIVIDUAL MERIT PROMOTION PROCEDURE (Revised 2016)

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. The purpose of the Individual Merit Promotion (IMP) procedure is to give recognition to scientific researchers who have made, and who will continue to make, an outstanding personal contribution in their field.
2. Individual merit promotion reflects scientific merit. It does not require a wider range of organisational duties to be taken on within the management structure of the employing organisation. Indeed staff can transfer from an organisational line management post to an IM post at the same level if they meet the requirements of the IM procedure.
3. The criteria for each of the three levels of IM promotion are described at Annex A.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, PART-TIME WORKING, CAREER BREAKS

4. The Research Councils and other participating organisations are invited to make nominations annually for individual merit promotion. These will be considered by the IMP Panel, currently chaired by Professor David Fowler. The IMP procedure aims to ensure that all nominations are treated fairly regardless of ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability or gender and will take account of individual career patterns, when assessing candidates for promotion.

Candidates who work part-time or who have returned after career breaks are expected to show momentum and to have achieved the same high level of excellence as a full-time candidate, including recent outputs of a similar quality. They are not, however, expected to have produced the same quantity of work over their earlier careers. Although each individual case is considered on its merits, the IMP panel is guided by the 2013 UK University REF Guidelines for defining the expected quantitative reductions in output:

Part-time working, secondments and career breaks

No reduction in outputs if the average days worked over a 5 year period is >4.0 days per week. For greater absences, outputs reduced proportionately to the number of days worked compared with a Full Time Equivalent.

Maternity, paternity and adoption leave

For each period of statutory maternity leave of any length, or for each period of paternity or adoption leave lasting 4 months or more, per 5 year period, a 25% reduction in outputs.

Staff on a flexible or part time working arrangement are encouraged to apply and will not be held at a disadvantage.

INDIVIDUAL MERIT PROMOTION CRITERIA

5. Promotion within the IMP procedure is based on the following general criteria:
 - a) Candidates will have made an outstanding personal contribution to their area of scientific and/or technical enquiry. It is not sufficient to demonstrate that they have worked well and achieved good results in their present grade. Candidates, and their line management, must be able to clearly demonstrate excellence in the current grade, show consistently very high evaluations in their annual appraisals, and be clearly worthy of promotion to the higher grade on scientific merit.

- b) Candidates must also demonstrate the potential to make a further outstanding personal contribution to scientific enquiry, and to have a clear conception of the general objectives of their future research and the methods of achieving them.
- c) Candidates, and their line management, must demonstrate that their research has made, and is likely to continue to make, a significant contribution to the goals and priorities of the employing organisation.
- d) Candidates should be able to demonstrate that their research achievement and performance has achieved a high degree of external recognition, both nationally and internationally, and has influenced other scientists working in their field. More specific criteria, linked to the nature of the research being undertaken (e.g. basic, strategic, applied etc.) are set out in Annex A.

PROCEDURE FOR NOMINATIONS

- 6. When initially considering the nominations, the Panel can decide that some candidates do not meet the criteria of the scheme and should therefore not be interviewed. Where the Panel considers there to be a prima facie case for IM promotion, or where the Panel is uncertain, opinions will be obtained from at least three referees (four for promotion to IMP levels 2 and 1) from outside the employing Council or organisation, who have relevant specialist knowledge. A minimum of one referee (in the case of IMP level 3) or two referees (in the case of IMP levels 2 and 1) will be active members of internationally recognised non- UK research groups.
- 7. The Panel will appoint one or more experts from outside the employing organisation to interview candidates who have been approved in the initial sift. The experts must be distinguished senior scientists, whose peer judgements are widely respected. At present, all Panel members sit on each interview.
- 8. The purpose of the interviews is to examine in greater detail the candidates' work, their contribution to scientific enquiry and their intended future work. Candidates should be prepared to give a short description of their work and to be questioned on all aspects, but particularly in some depth on those elements they have selected as being representative of their most significant work.
- 9. The recommendation of the interview panel will be considered at the end of the series of interviews, and a decision will be made on each candidate's suitability for promotion.
- 10. In endorsing the candidate's nomination, the employer must provide assurance that the candidate will be able to carry out the proposed future work, in terms of both opportunity and facilities. In this context, Directors are required to confirm that candidates will be able to devote the major proportion of their work time to personal research and associated activities over the next five year period, consistent with the high levels of scientific quality and productivity required for IMP, and that any organisational role which they are required to play within the institute during this period will be compatible with this commitment to personal research.

APPEALS

- 11. There is no appeals procedure against a decision on IM promotion, since Panel judgements are based on peer assessment of scientific quality. Unsuccessful candidates may be reconsidered for IM promotion in the following or in subsequent years.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF INDIVIDUAL MERIT PROMOTION HOLDERS

- 12. Candidates hold Individual Merit promotion only as long as they continue to meet the criteria for the scheme, and continue to maintain the standards for which it

was awarded. Periodic reviews are held to ensure that the overall and individual standards of the scheme are being rigorously maintained. Each holder of an individual merit promotion will be fully reviewed within a maximum of five years from the initial promotion. These reviews will involve a submission by the IMP holder's line management covering details of the work since promotion or last review; the distinction of the work; and a plan of the work to be undertaken during the next five years. Referees' reports will be called for at the Panel's discretion. Institute Directors or Heads of Organisations are required to notify the IMP Secretariat if the time available to an IMP holder for personal research ceases to be a major proportion in any consecutive two year period.

13. As a result of the review, the Panel may:
 - (i) confirm the post-holder in their IM grade;
 - (ii) ask for more information, either internally or externally by way of referees' comments, to assist in the review;
 - (iii) as a result of the additional information it may confirm the post-holder's IM grade;
 - (iv) either initially or as a result of the additional information, it may decide to interview the IMP holder before deciding on future IM status;
 - (v) it may withdraw the IM grading if it considers that the IM criteria are no longer being met.

14. As in the case of the original IM promotion, there is no appeal against a decision of the Panel on a review of IM status.

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ANNEX A – GRADING GUIDANCE

a) IMP LEVEL 3

Candidates involved in basic and strategic research should be able to demonstrate an excellent record of innovative and original research, with substantial and significant contributions to the development of their area of science. They are expected to have a good international reputation, exemplified by most, but not necessarily all, of the following indicators: an extensive history of publishing original research (as opposed to comment), mainly as first, last and/or communicating author in the leading ISI-ranked journals in the specialization, as well as some examples in journals covering a wider range of disciplines (e.g. journals of The Royal Society) or, preferably, all sciences (e.g. Science, Nature, PNAS); invitations to deliver invited (especially keynote or plenary) lectures at leading international symposia and congresses; a track record as a successful PI of winning national (e.g. NERC, BBSRC) or international (e.g. EU) research grants, and of leading innovative research teams; prizes or similar measures of esteem awarded by learned societies; a senior role in internationally-leading learned societies or equivalent service on senior committees or advisory boards. Candidates should be able to justify their intended future research programme with a clear statement of the nature and extent of their involvement in it as active scientists.

Candidates involved in the application of existing knowledge should have an excellent record of innovation in the development and exploitation of technology, processes or products (including computer software and systems). Candidates should be able to demonstrate that their future programme of work will maintain a high level of development and innovation.

b) IMP LEVEL 2

Candidates should be established leaders in their fields and have made clear and substantial contributions to the development of their area of science.

Candidates involved with basic and strategic research should be able to show that they have provided a high level of original published material in terms of both quality and quantity.

Candidates should have an excellent and wide international reputation for their research and should have contributed to important discoveries, which are recognised as of broad international significance to the development of their area of science. Candidates should be able to provide a clear statement of the nature and extent of their future research programme and their likely personal contributions to scientific advance.

Candidates concerned with the application of existing knowledge should have introduced innovative concepts to the development and exploitation of technology, processes or products, including computer software and systems. Candidates should have been responsible, where appropriate, for the take up of these techniques, processes or products by industry. They should be able to demonstrate an expectation that this level of creativity will continue.

c) **IMP LEVEL 1**

Candidates should be widely acknowledged authorities and world leaders in their subject and specialism who have contributed substantially to the discovery of new scientific knowledge and discoveries or who have opened new fields of fruitful and useful research. They should be of pre-eminent international standing and acclaim.

Candidates in the field of basic and strategic research should hold a (typically 'the') leading position among scientists in their specialism. They should be regarded as people whose published work has had a major influence on the development of their specialism. Candidates should be able to state clearly their plans for future research, and illustrate how it will continue to have a significant impact on their field of science.

Candidates concerned with the application of existing knowledge should have made contributions, which have resulted in major advances in the development or exploitation of technology, processes or products of special significance. They should be acknowledged leaders in their field and likely to have a profound influence on the future development of their specialism.