Learning and Teaching Promotions - FAQs

Q. Do I need to do educational research to be promoted?

A. Staff do not need to be undertaking educational research to be promoted in the ‘practitioner’ route. We expect all staff to engage in the activities of evaluation and critical enquiry as part of the development of an evidence-based personal practice. However, staff who wish to apply to the position of Associate Professor of Education/Reader in Education or Professor of Education should be aware that undertaking of educational research will be required to be eligible for promotion to these positions.

Q. Why have you changed the role descriptors?

A. These have not changed dramatically; however, they have been revised to make sure that they are more closely aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Q. The role profiles are very long. Do I need to do everything listed?

A. No. These are representative work activities; we don’t expect everyone to be doing everything. We’re also aware that some staff are undertaking different tasks. They are intended to provide an indication of the types of tasks, and their level of complexity, which would be expected at the different levels, demonstrating the typical progression in these tasks. Staff are encouraged to produce a claim based on their own role which is appropriate for their departmental context. It is expected that the role profiles will provide a point of reference for those designing new jobs. Doing so will support future promotions possibilities by providing staff with a set of tasks in which they can grow and progress.

Q. Do I need to fill in all the sections on the form?

A. No. Please fill in the sections which are relevant for your role.

Q. How can staff make a sideways move, transferring between the Learning & Teaching and Academic & Research job families?

A. We encourage staff to think about moving from roles in the Academic & Research job family to the Learning & Teaching job family if this better reflects their role and career aspirations. Similarly, we encourage staff in practitioner grades to think about moving into the educational research grades. For every move, staff will be asked to evidence their claim, so you will need to apply via the appropriate promotions process. So, for example, a member of staff who is currently a Senior Lecturer could apply, through the Learning and Teaching promotions process, to become a Principal Teaching Fellow. A member of staff who is currently a Senior Teaching Fellow could apply, through the Academic Promotions process, to become a Senior Lecturer.

Q. If I am promoted to Associate Professor of Education/Reader in Education or Professor of Education, what does that mean for REF?

A. These roles fall into the scope of REF. The College’s long-term aspiration is to develop a dedicated REF submission in this area, however in terms of impact on the College’s approach to REF2021, submission of individuals will be considered on an individual basis while capacity and expertise is developed.

Q. What titles will be available for staff applying for promotion within the educational
research pathway?

A. It is expected that the full title conferred will reflect the disciplinary context, e.g., Professor of Engineering Education, Associate Professor of Digital Education, Professor of Higher Education etc.

Q. Is there a requirement for staff to complete the PG Certificate, Diploma or Master’s in University Learning and Teaching?

A. No. However, completion of a relevant, practice-based qualification would provide good, recognisable evidence for your application for promotion.

Q. To apply to the educational research pathway, will I be required to supervise students?

A. No. We recognise that there will be fewer opportunities for staff to build a research group as they would do within their own discipline, and that it’s very unlikely that big educational research groups will develop. There is funding available through the Learning and Teaching Strategy to support innovation, and this includes funding to support evaluation and research. You might therefore include in your Department’s bid a part-time or full-time PhD student as part of your project; these can be recruited in collaboration with CHERS.

Q. What’s the link between the practitioner and research streams?

A. We believe that it’s important for staff to engage in evaluation and critical enquiry as part of the development of an evidence-based personal practice. We aim to support our teaching fellows and learning technologists to undertake scholarly activities where they wish to develop in this area, while also supporting staff who prefer not to engage in educational research. Gaining promotion via the educational research route will be difficult. Progression in research will involve a growing national and international reputation, combined with individuals making an increasing impact on the discipline.

Q. What if my line manager doesn’t support my application?

A. Staff can make a personal application for promotion.

Q. How can I encourage my line manager to agree to my spending time on educational research?

A. We encourage all Departments to write job descriptions which make space for scholarship as we believe that this will be an important way for managers to attract and retain good people. Heads of Department who have questions about how best to support their Learning and Teaching staff should discuss this with the Vice-Provost (Education) or Director, Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship.

Q. How do we demonstrate evidence-based practice?

A. There’s no requirement for submission of a formal portfolio. We encourage staff to review the paperwork and think about how best to evidence good practice in their own practice. Evidence might include a statement from a student, from a line manager or course lead; this will depend on the narrative case that you are making.

Q. How will you know when you’ve done enough in terms of evidence-based practice?

A. Staff should look at the role descriptors, which are quite comprehensive, and have an informed conversation with their line manager. We also encourage staff to come and talk to
one of the promotions panel on a case-by-case basis. Opportunities will grow in line with the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Q. Is guidance available for staff in how to evidence educational research?

A. Appendix 5 of the Academic Promotions Guidance (Criteria for Promotion for Senior Learning and Teaching Staff) includes a guidance note on using educational publications for promotion. Staff can also discuss this directly with the Vice-Provost (Education) or Director, Centre for Higher Education Research and Scholarship.

Q. How were these changes communicated?

A. Briefings for staff took place in June 2018, followed by further briefings in September 2018 and a presentation to HoDs in October 2018. All materials relating to these briefing meeting, including a Panopto recording of the staff briefing and slides from the briefing, are available on the Learning and Teaching Promotions webpage.

Q. Is practitioner pathway available to people without a student-facing role?

A. Yes. There will be a number of roles in this job family where staff are not in student-facing roles.

Q. You suggest submitting a supporting statement from a student. Would this not risk introducing power issues?

A. This will depend on the case that you’re making. If, for example, your case is that you have introduced an exciting innovation, then you might look at comments already received (for example in SOLE or a SACA nomination), as evidence for good innovation is likely to include the student voice. As we start working with students as partners in educational projects, there will be opportunities to seek different kinds of statement. We recommend that staff think about what would provide the best evidence to support their claim.

Q. Will all Learning and Teaching job descriptions need to be re-written?

A. No, this would not be appropriate. Staff are encouraged to discuss their roles and opportunities with their line managers as part of their PRDP, thinking about the opportunities available as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Q. What’s the timeline for the promotions process?

A. The timelines for the promotions processes are published on the Learning and Teaching Promotions: L&T website. There are three promotions processes per academic year.

Q. Will all Learning and Teaching staff be considered for promotion?

A. Yes. Heads of Department will be asked, at least once each year, to consider the grading of all members of staff in the Learning and Teaching job family within their Department. They should also consider whether any staff who are outside of the Learning and Teaching job family should be considered for transfer into the Learning and Teaching job family.

Q. I am applying for promotion to Imperial College Teaching Fellow. Does my referee need to be an external?

A. Yes. Referees should be:

- of appropriate seniority in a role relevant to the type of promotion sought
• familiar with learning and teaching at research-based universities in the UK
• external to the College
• independent
• as knowledgeable as possible about the candidate’s work

Referees should not:
- have worked at the College within the last five years
- work closely with the candidate
- have published work with the candidate within the last five years

Q. What is the Appeal process?

A. If the line manager or personal applicant supplied substantive information but believes that the full case for promotion was not considered, then they should write to the Academic Progressions Manager via email: learning-and-teaching-promotion@imperial.ac.uk within 21 days of receipt of the decision. The line manager (if the appellant is making an appeal independently of his/her line manager) and Head of Department must be informed that an appeal is to be submitted, and both the line manager and Head of Department must submit written confirmation that they have seen the appeal paperwork.

The Deputy HR Director (HR Operations) (or a nominee who has not previously been involved) will review the representation in conjunction with a senior member of the staff in the Learning and Teaching job family who has not previously been involved with the case. The review may determine: (a) that the grounds upon which the appeal were made have been fully considered and that the previous decision should remain, (b) to refer the matter to the original Review Panel for further consideration, or (c) to arrange for the role to be re-evaluated at the next meeting of the Review Panel. The Deputy HR Director (HR Operations) (or nominee) will report back to the appellant within 21 days to inform him/her of the outcome of this review. The Deputy HR Director (HR Operations) may extend the time limits at his/her discretion in extenuating circumstances. If the appeal is successful, the change in job level will be backdated in line with the original request.