

ACADEMIC CAREER FRAMEWORK

REVIEW OUTCOMES AND KEY PROPOSED CHANGES

Background

As announced by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) in December 2024, Flinders University has commenced the process of review and development of a new Flinders Academic Career Framework (ACF). To facilitate this work an Academic Career Framework (ACF) Committee was established in late 2024, Chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research. The University also engaged an external senior academic to undertake a review of current practice at Flinders University.

The review process included a detailed review of the current promotions framework, focus groups, review of previous feedback provided to the University, and environmental scanning.

Ten focus group sessions were held in February and March 2025 involving nominated academic staff representing all academic levels (A to E), employment type (teaching specialist, teaching and research, and research only) across colleges and portfolios. The sessions explored the effectiveness of current processes and identified ways in which the introduction of a revised ACF and policy framework could better support and guide diverse academic career paths.

Findings from the review processes were wide-ranging. Promotions committee and focus group feedback suggested opportunities across criteria, processes, systems and supports. In particular, feedback from these groups emphasised the importance of inclusiveness, consistency, clarity and simplicity in our promotion processes. Recommendations arising from the review were considered by the ACF Committee and have informed the development of the proposed ACF and supporting policy documents.

Following approvals, further guiding materials will be developed, including detailed guides for committees, applicants and supervisors.

Key proposed changes

The following key changes are proposed.

Academic Career Framework and profiles

- The introduction of an Academic Career Framework incorporating summary academic profiles and indicators spanning all academic levels and domains. This document is to replace the current suite of profile documents.
- A renewed focus on leadership, innovation and impact across domains, with widening and deepening of influence progressing through the academic levels.
- Profile indicators have been broadened to be more inclusive of a range of non-traditional activities such those relevant to education support, industry and creative research outputs.
- A wider range of examples of evidence has been provided.
- Explanations of expectations regarding conduct, span of influence, sustained performance and preparedness for promotion have been included.

Submission requirements

- Submission requirements have been simplified and shortened.

- In addition to the current Relative to Opportunity field, an additional field will allow staff to describe their work context and how that may influence their achievements.
- Two additional short fields have been added regarding leadership intent and application of Flinders values.
- Summary data reports are to be uploaded, removing the need for manual line by line entry of research and teaching data. Work has commenced to improve reporting capabilities and ensure that reports are available to staff for this purpose.
- Use of supplementary material has been streamlined and clarified, with applicants now able to upload a single document of supporting material as a portfolio of evidence reflecting claims. This may include additional data not contained in summary reports, feedback and visual or text-based evidence of outcomes from activities.
- Constrained weightings have been removed in favour of nomination of broad areas of strength for consideration. Staff will be able to develop their narrative account of achievements in a way that best suits their areas of emphasis and allows for recent role changes, scholarship and interconnected activities across domains.
- Inclusion of work carried out at other institutions has been clarified.

Committees

- A Terms of Reference document has been developed, clarifying the role and scope of promotion committee activities.
- A standing First Nations representative is now included in committee membership.
- A single B/C committee is proposed, addressing longstanding equity concerns and feedback, along with a significant reduction in administrative support load. This committee is to be chaired by a nominee of the Vice-Chancellor.
- All committee members will be expected to undertake training that incorporates identification of conflicts of interest, equity (including Relative to Opportunity considerations) and promotions assessment across a range of role types.
- The role of members has been clarified in regard to contributions to review, consideration and decisions. The use of lead reviewers has been discontinued.
- Committee feedback to applicants will be in writing, and committees will have the ability to review prior feedback where an applicant has been unsuccessful in promotion within two years of the current application.

Supports

- A University framework for supports will be developed, with consistency in core support material and events to be provided. Colleges and Divisions will continue to be able to add to these supports as needed.
- All supporting materials and information related to promotions will be maintained on the Academic Career Hub website, providing a one-stop resource for applicants, supervisors and committees.
- Further guidance on development of applications, including articulation of professional conduct/values, assessment of Relative to Opportunity and context statements, use of evidence for claims and options for evidencing embargoed or commercial-in-confidence activity is to be provided in a supporting guide to developing a case for promotion. These guides will be housed online on the Academic Career Framework Hub.