

## Flinders University

### Academic Promotions Resources: Supervisor Guide



# Supervisor Guide: Supporting Staff Applying for Academic Promotion

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## 1. Introduction

This Supervisor Guide provides practical advice to help supervisors support staff through the academic promotion process. It complements the [Supervisor Training Session \(under development\)](#) offered and should be used alongside the [Applicant Guide](#) to ensure supervisors are up to date with current expectations and processes.

This guide will assist supervisors in providing informed, equitable and constructive guidance so staff can confidently prepare strong, well-supported applications.

## 2. Your Role in the Promotion Process

Supervisors play a critical role in:

- Providing early and ongoing career development guidance and support
- Helping staff assess their readiness for promotion
- Supporting the development of a strong, evidence-based application
- Providing an informed, fair, and constructive supervisor report
- Upholding the integrity and equity of the promotions process

Your role is not to decide whether someone should be promoted – that is the committee’s responsibility – but to ensure staff are well-prepared, well-informed, and supported.

## 3. Preparing Staff for Promotion

### 3.1 Encourage early planning

- Support staff to think about promotion well ahead of the application cycle
- Help staff map their achievements against the Flinders Academic Career Framework (ACF)
- Discuss career goals, leadership aspirations, and development needs
- Ensure staff are aware of the relevant support available (e.g. Applicant Guide, Information Sessions, Workshops etc).

### 3.2 Assess readiness collaboratively

- Review their career trajectory, portfolio of evidence, and ability to deliver at the next academic level
- Provide honest, constructive feedback about strengths, gaps and readiness
- Encourage staff to build a 3-5 year narrative of growth, impact, and leadership.

### 3.3 Guide the development of a research, teaching, or service plan

- Guide staff in their development of short-term (12 months) and longer-term (3-5 years) plans
- Ensure plans reflect realistic opportunities and College / University priorities.

## 4. Supporting Staff Writing Applications

### 4.1 Aligning with the Flinders Academic Career Framework and Profiles

Supervisors should help applicants:

- Understand how their role fits within the ACF
- Identify equivalent indicators where traditional ones don't apply
- Highlight cross-domain contributions (e.g., research informing teaching)
- Make leadership visible, even if this is not done formally.

### 4.2 Role context and special circumstances

Supervisors should help applicants:

- Identify relevant contextual factors (role type, workload, secondments, clinical/industry duties)
- Understand how to frame relative to opportunity in a strengths-based, factual way. The Relative to Opportunity Guide, Appendix 2 of the [Applicant Guide](#), will provide some guidance on this.

### 4.3 Evidence and narrative development

Supervisors should help applicants:

- Identify meaningful evidence of impact
- Develop a narrative that shows trajectory, leadership, and sustained achievement
- Ensure they avoid simply listing activities – instead, focusing on outcomes and influence.

## 5. Writing the Supervisor Report

Supervisors are required to provide a brief report once an applicant has submitted their application. This includes assessing the application in full and making comment on:

- Your assessment of their application
- Any considerations that should be taken into account related to the field/context of their role
- Your own observations of their achievements

For applications to Levels B and C this will flow to the Dean (People & Resources) for their report, and applications for Levels D and E will flow to the Vice-President and Executive Dean. Applicants will be able to view supervisor, Dean (People and Resources) and Vice-President & Executive Dean reports, and will have the opportunity to provide a final comment before these reach the Promotions Committee.

Supervisor reports should:

### **Be evidence-informed**

- Reflect your *direct* observations of performance
- Verify achievements where possible
- Identify additional contributions the applicant may have overlooked.

### **Be balanced and constructive**

- Acknowledge strengths, leadership, and growth
- Note any areas where development is still emerging, framed constructively
- Avoid overly brief or generic statements.

### **Provide context (if relevant)**

- Explain role expectations, workload distribution, and any structural constraints
- Clarify discipline norms (e.g., publication patterns, teaching loads, grant cycles).

### **Maintain fairness and integrity**

- Avoid comparisons with other staff/applicants
- Focus solely on the individual's achievements and readiness for promotion.

## **6. Key Questions for Supervisors to Consider**

- Has the staff member demonstrated **sustained achievement** at their current level?
- Can I clearly articulate their **leadership, influence, impact and trajectory**?
- Have I supported them to develop a **realistic, strategic plan**?
- Have I provided **fair, evidence-based feedback**?
- Have I helped them understand how to present their case **relative to opportunity**?
- Have I ensured my supervisor report is **accurate, evidence based, constructive, and contextualised**?

## **7. Supporting Staff Following Promotion Outcomes**

Supervisors will be involved in supporting applicants once outcomes are shared and should assist applicants to implement any actions arising from feedback.

### **7.1 If the staff member is successful**

A successful promotion is an opportunity to reinforce confidence and set a positive trajectory for the next stage of their career.

Supervisors should consider:

- Acknowledging and celebrating the achievement, recognising the work that led to the

outcome

- Discussing the expectations of the new Level, including leadership responsibilities, scope of influence, and opportunities for growth
- Reviewing workload and priorities to ensure they align with the expectations of the promoted level
- Supporting transition planning, including mentoring opportunities, committee roles, or leadership development
- Encouraging reflection on how their strengths can be leveraged in their new role.

## 7.2 If the staff member is *unsuccessful*

Your role is to help the staff member maintain momentum, confidence, and clarity about their next steps.

Supervisors should consider:

- Arranging a timely, supportive conversation to discuss the outcome
- Acknowledging the effort invested and validate the disappointment they may feel
- Reviewing committee feedback together, helping the staff member interpret it constructively
- Identifying clear, achievable development goals that address the feedback
- Creating or updating a development plan, including mentoring, training, or targeted opportunities to address any gaps identified through feedback
- Reinforcing that promotion is a trajectory, and that many strong applicants are successful on subsequent attempts offering ongoing support, including regular check-ins to track progress.

## 7.3 Maintaining a supportive culture

Regardless of the outcome, supervisors should:

- Promote a culture where promotion is seen as one part of long-term career development
- Ensure staff feel valued for their contributions, not only for promotion outcomes
- Encourage staff to seek mentoring, peer support, and other tailored development opportunities.

## 8. Good Practice for Supervisors

- Schedule regular developmental/career focused conversations, not just annual reviews
- Encourage staff to seek mentoring from senior academics beyond the supervisory line
- Help staff access development opportunities aligned with their goals
- Celebrate achievements and acknowledge progress over time
- Engage People & Culture for tailored support, including guidance on development planning or navigating the promotion process.