Promoting teaching

Good practice benchmarks

The Higher Education Academy

Contents

Purpose

This document, *Promoting teaching: good practice benchmarks*, provides a set of benchmarks and supportive material which is designed to assist higher education institutions (HEIs) to review their practices and policies for recognition of teaching in academic promotion.

This brief resource will enable universities to:
* identify gaps and good practice in university promotion processes;
* decide on aspects of promotion practice to review and refine;
* improve alignment between policy and practice.

Background

This set of benchmarks were developed in a benchmarking partnership across four universities, two in Australia (University of Tasmania and University of Wollongong) and two in the UK (University of Leicester and Newcastle University). The experience of these four HEIs was brought together and tested in a cross-institutional benchmarking project over nine months, on behalf of the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA).

Informing principles included:
* equal status for teaching achievements evaluated as equivalent to those in other areas such as research and service;
* need for evidence to found credible comparisons across areas of achievement.

Each of the four partner institutions had policies and practices in place to recognise and reward teaching and each had conducted recent reviews to improve recognition of teaching in academic promotion. The benchmarks were first developed and tested in each institution through a self-review process, and further refined in cross- institutional benchmarking across all four. Additionally, members of an international advisory group representing 15 HE providers provided valuable advice and comments on models at different stages of development, and feedback was sought at forums for deputy vice-chancellors and pro-vice-chancellors (teaching and learning) in Canberra and London.

Overview

Eighteen benchmarks have been developed which offer a comprehensive set of indicators for evaluating recognition of teaching in academic promotion. From plans to leadership, from support to systems, each benchmark points towards good practice in achieving parity of esteem for teaching.

The benchmarks have been grouped into six dimensions (D1-D6), reflecting critical aspects of the academic promotion process:
D1	Plans and policies
D2	Perceptions and practices
D3	Promotion applicants
D4	Promotion applications
D5	Promotion committee
D6	Outcomes and review

A review of academic promotion would ideally involve all six dimensions, although an HE provider could choose to review a selection of these.

In the next section, the 18 good practice benchmarks are presented according to the six dimensions and this is followed, in section five, by sets of focus questions. These questions are suggested in relation to each benchmark to help identify areas for evidence collection, analysis, discussion and evaluation. Finally in section six, two ways of using these benchmarks are outlined. Further detail of the application of the good practice benchmarks can be found in the *Promoting teaching: benchmarking guide*.

Good practice benchmarks

D1 Plans and policies

1　University plans reflect a commitment to parity of esteem between teaching achievements and other achievements in promotion.

2　University policies reflect a commitment to parity of esteem between teaching achievements and other achievements in promotion.

D2 Perceptions and practices

3　University leaders support promotion for teaching achievement.

4　Leaders of academic units support promotion for teaching achievement.

5　Peer interactions support promotion for teaching achievement.

D3 Promotion applicants

6　Potential applicants are offered advice and assistance on evidence of teaching achievement, which is aligned to policy and career planning.

7　Academic mentors and supervisors are equipped to give consistent and accurate advice to applicants on teaching evidence and teaching pathways to promotion.

D4 Promotion applications

8　Equal status for teaching is clearly stated in promotion forms and guidelines.

9　Application forms and guidelines for evidencing teaching/teaching scholarship are clear and detailed.

10　Systems are in place to collect and validate evidence of teaching for promotion applications.

D5 Promotion committee

11　Membership of promotion committees is appropriately balanced to represent teaching.

12　Promotion committees are well-prepared to evaluate the teaching achievements of applicants.

13　Promotion committee procedures are designed to support consistent and equitable decisions on teaching.

14　Where there are processes for external evaluation, attention to teaching mirrors attention to other areas of achievement.

15　Promotion committee procedures for evaluating teaching are transparent to current and prospective staff.

D6 Outcomes and review

16　Promotion outcomes can be demonstrated to be sound and equitable for teaching.

17　A transparent cycle of review tracks recognition of teaching in academic promotion.

18　Academic staff perceive that teaching achievements are valued in promotion processes.

Good practice benchmarks with sample focus questions

Plans and policies

Benchmark 1	University plans reflect a commitment to parity of esteem between teaching achievements and other achievements in promotion

- Are workforce planning and retention strategies focused on national priorities and drivers in teaching to the same degree as other areas of HE performance?
- Do the university strategic plan and other high-level planning documents promote the importance of achieving parity of esteem in rewarding teaching achievement?

Benchmark 2	University policies reflect a commitment to parity of esteem between teaching achievements and other achievements in promotion

- Does the academic promotion policy explicitly recognise teaching achievement as a pathway to promotion?
- Where there are several defined types of academic career (e.g. teaching-intensive, research-only, combined), does university policy affirm a pathway to promotion to all academic levels for each career type?
- Does the academic promotion policy reflect sector good practice guidelines on recognising teaching?
- Does the academic promotions policy offer flexibility in how academics can present their areas of achievement in different combinations, for example can applicants rate/rank/weight teaching as either their highest area of achievement or as equal with another achievement area (e.g. research or service)?

Perceptions and practices

Benchmark 3	University leaders support promotion for teaching achievement

- Do those in university leadership roles (i.e. members of the senior executive, chair of central promotion committee) and the senior governance bodies (i.e. council/senate/academic board) demonstrate their support for achievement in teaching as a pathway to promotion (e.g. in staff forums, leadership workshops, committee meetings)?
- Is there a member of the senior executive available to assist faculty leaders with guidance on teaching pathways to promotion?

Benchmark 4	Leaders of academic units support promotion for teaching achievement

- Do those in faculty/school/college/department leadership roles demonstrate their support for achievement in teaching as a pathway to promotion, for example by encouraging academics to collect evidence of teaching achievements, offering career planning on teaching achievements, providing peer observation partners and/or encouraging promotion applications based on teaching?
- Do those in leadership roles have a sound understanding of how teaching can be evidenced in applications for promotion at different academic levels?
- When nominating academics for career development programmes, succession planning, retention allowances, or study/sabbatical leave – is there parity of esteem for teaching academics?

Benchmark 5	Peer interactions support promotion for teaching achievement

- In faculty/department planning forums, is teaching-related work articulated and given the same or similar emphasis as other areas of academic achievement, such as research or service?
- Are teaching-related achievements celebrated and valued within each faculty?
- Are all faculties/departments embracing a culture which recognises teaching as a pathway to promotion?

Promotion applicants

Benchmark 6	Potential applicants are offered advice and assistance on evidence of teaching achievement, which is aligned to policy and career planning

- Do all academics have access to a mentor or supervisor whose role includes giving sound advice on promotion applications, including applications based on teaching-related achievements?
- Do career development interviews, appraisals and performance reviews include a discussion of achievements and goals in

learning and teaching and how to collect a mix of evidence for academic promotion, aligned to current responsibilities and future goals?
- Are academics encouraged to attend workshops or briefings on the promotion process so that they receive accurate advice and understand the types of evidence of teaching they might collect over time?
- Is peer mentoring available to promotion applicants for different areas of academic achievement?
- Do applicants have access to an institutional point of contact for advice on questions that arise on draft promotion applications?
- Are any institutional advice and support staff (e.g. within HR, academic development) trained on the full scope of teaching responsibilities and how to support applicants working on applications?

Benchmark 7	Academic mentors and supervisors are equipped to give consistent and accurate advice to applicants on teaching evidence and teaching pathways to promotion

- Are heads of school departments and other academic mentors/supervisors offered induction, mentoring and peer support on how to help academics prepare for promotion based on a mix of evidence of teaching achievement?
- Do heads of school and academic mentors/supervisors in all faculties/departments/schools/ institutes give consistent messages, aligned with policy and guidelines, about preparing a case for promotion based on teaching?
- Do head of schools and academic mentors/supervisors have access to a senior executive who can give definitive advice on questions about draft promotion applications and evidence of teaching?

Promotion applications

Benchmark 8	Equal status for teaching is clearly stated in promotion forms and guidelines

- Do forms and guidelines include a statement that the university supports parity of esteem for teaching achievements?
- Are examples included in guidelines of the equal status given to teaching achievements? For example, is it stated that national teaching grants (HEA in the UK, Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in Australia) are as equally valued as national research grants?
- Do forms and guidelines include a statement that promotion pathways are equally available to teaching-only academics?
- Do the ways in which teaching can be rated, evidenced, discussed etc. in applications allow applicants to select from a mix of evidence to best demonstrate their full range of teaching achievements?
- Are the ways in which teaching can be rated, evidenced, discussed etc. on application forms equivalent to the ways/spaces/headings allowed for other areas of achievement, e.g. research?

Benchmark 9	Application forms and guidelines for evidencing teaching/teaching scholarship are clear and detailed

- Is teaching clearly defined, for example is it clear whether 'teaching' includes teaching scholarship and teaching leadership or whether aspects of these should be discussed under 'research' or 'service'?
- Are applicants asked to reflect on the evidence about their teaching practice and align their practice to a teaching philosophy?
- Do written guidelines encourage inclusion of a range of evidence of teaching achievements (including innovations, awards, leadership, external recognition and teaching scholarship) and provide examples of how a mix of evidence can be used to support an application?
- Do written guidelines provide examples of how evidence of teaching achievements may vary with academic level, e.g. increased responsibility for curriculum and leadership at higher levels?
- If the university has teaching-only academics, are their grounds for promotion clear compared to those for other applicants?

Benchmark 10	Application forms and guidelines for evidencing teaching/teaching scholarship are clear and detailed

- Are all academics with teaching responsibilities encouraged or required to collect formal evidence to be eligible for promotion?
- Are there formal systems in place to assist with the collection of evidence of teaching achievements to be used in academic promotion?
- Do formal evidence systems recognise and support a diversity of teaching approaches, e.g. face-to-face and online, onshore and offshore?
- Is there a portfolio tool which allows academics to bring together a mix of evidence – both formal and informal (e.g. student surveys, awards and fellowships, teacher certifications, peer observations, peer evaluations of curriculum, reflections etc.)?
- Is there flexibility in the teaching portfolio tool, for example can questions be added to surveys, can areas of focus for peer observations be self-selected, can an academic access their portfolio online, can they access data after they move to another university?
- Do formal systems and portfolio tools respect the confidentiality of applicants and give them choice as to when and how

their teaching evidence is collected and used?
- Are formal systems generally perceived to provide valid and reliable measures of achievement that compare to those of other areas of achievement?

Promotion committee

Benchmark 11	Membership of promotion committees is appropriately balanced to represent teaching

- Is the promotion committee constituted to ensure there is a balance between all areas of academic achievement (e.g. teaching and research expertise, other expertise)?
- Is there a member with an equity role or an equity observer to ensure the promotion process is based on equal opportunity?

Benchmark 12	Promotion committees are well-prepared to evaluate the teaching achievements of applicants

- Do guidelines and policies given to promotion committee members reflect the university's commitment to recognising excellence in teaching achievement?
- Do all committee members receive training or mentoring, both initially and on an ongoing basis, which provides advice on how the university evaluates teaching?
- Are promotion committee members briefed on how different aspects of teaching/scholarship of teaching can be evidenced and what evidence may be appropriate at different academic levels?
- Are promotion committee members briefed on equity and diversity issues which may impact on teaching academics?

Benchmark 13	Promotion committee procedures are designed to support consistent and equitable decisions on teaching

- If there is more than one promotion committee in the institution, do the committees operate in a consistent manner?
- Is each application decided on its merits, or are there quotas?
- Is there a format provided for promotions committees to discuss and evaluate applicants on each area of academic achievement?
- Is the recognition of teaching achievement supported in decision-making procedures?
- Is there a consideration given to equity issues, such as illness and carer responsibilities, which may impact on collection of evidence about teaching achievement?
- Does the promotions committee evaluate for diversity? For example, does the committee evaluate achievement against an individual job or role description, or otherwise allow for the role variations between academics who may be working on different faculty priorities (e.g. first-year teaching, curriculum development, academic developers, indigenous academics with outreach responsibilities)?
- Do feedback processes support both successful and unsuccessful applicants, including those who applied based on teaching achievement, by providing them with helpful advice for future applications?

Benchmark 14	Where there are processes for external evaluation, attention to teaching mirrors attention to other areas of achievement

- If external members or advisers are selected to attend committee meetings, is expertise in the evaluation of teaching a consideration?
- If reports are sought from external evaluators or referees, is there provision for evaluators/ referees to comment on an applicant's teaching?
- Are guidelines given to external advisers and reviewers on how the university evaluates evidence of teaching?

Benchmark 15	Promotion committee procedures for evaluating teaching are transparent to current and prospective staff

- Does the university website disclose aspects of promotion processes which may affect prospective staff, e.g. whether teaching-only staff can access academic promotion, whether there is a requirement to complete a teaching course, whether teacher surveys are mandatory, the length of time needed to collect teaching surveys to be eligible for promotion?
- Are promotion procedures affecting recognition of teaching clearly described on the university intranet, e.g. list of committee members, how committees are constituted to ensure a balance of members, how committee members are prepared for their role in evaluating teaching etc?

Outcomes and review

Benchmark 16	Promotion outcomes can be demonstrated to be sound and equitable for teaching

- Are success rates for applicants who rank teaching highly similar to those applicants who rank research highly, and is this true at each academic level?
- When analysing gender of applicants positioning their teaching as excellent for promotion, are success rates for women comparable to those of men at each academic level?
- Are success rates for applicants that rank teaching highly comparable across faculties/departments?
- Is an academic who is very strong in teaching and average in research as likely to be promoted as an applicant who is very strong in research and average in teaching?
- If the university has teaching-only positions, are success rates of teaching-only applicants similar to those of other applicants?

Benchmark 17	A transparent cycle of review tracks recognition of teaching in academic promotion

- Is academic promotion data systematically collected, analysed and reported, including by gender, academic level, language background, area of highest ranked/weighted academic achievement and faculty/department?
- Is summary data, including information about teaching-based applications, on academic promotion made available to academic staff, for example published on the university's intranet?
- Are mechanisms in place to measure feedback and perceptions about teaching aspects of promotions applications, for example from successful and unsuccessful applicants; heads and deans; committee members?
- Does the university have a way of benchmarking academic promotion with other universities (e.g. external committee members, cross-university review of applications, participation in sector data collections)?
- Are mechanisms in place to use data and feedback to regularly review and improve all aspects of academic promotion, including areas of achievement, criteria, evidence, forms and guidelines?
- Are proposals for improved academic promotion processes presented to stakeholders (academic staff, deans/heads, committee members) and their representative bodies for review and enhancement before being finalised?

Benchmark 18	Academic staff perceive that teaching achievements are valued in promotion processes

- Is there data to indicate whether academics are aware or becoming more aware that the university recognises and rewards teaching achievement in promotion decisions?
- Is there data to indicate whether academics perceive or increasingly perceive that there is parity of esteem in promotion processes for each academic career type, including teaching-intensive pathways?
- Do results of reviews suggest that academics' understanding of recognition of teaching in promotion is reasonably accurate and well-informed?

Application

The information presented in this document can be used in an institutional review or a cross institutional review:

- **Institutional review**: use these benchmarks to compare your institution's policy and practices to sector good practice, with a view to identifying gaps and agreeing on areas for improvement.
- **Cross-institutional review**: use these benchmarks to develop and share knowledge and experience across two or more HEIs, in a process that recognises good practice, compares issues and concerns, identifies gaps and encourages development of solutions.

See the *Promoting teaching: benchmarking guide* for detailed guidance on both forms of review, together with templates to assist data collection and evaluation. See *Promoting teaching: making evidence count* for a discussion of scope of 'teaching' in HEIs, together with a detailed account of how teaching achievements are measured.

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