

+ Windows into practice

Recognising and rewarding diversity in teaching and scholarship careers at Nottingham Trent University

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Institutional context

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) is a post-1992 university in the East Midlands of England, the fifth largest university in the UK, and comprises around 40,000 students and 4000 staff. We have received TEF GOLD twice and we provide an excellent, inclusive educational experience for our diverse students. Our mission encompasses a commitment to civic engagement, with a strong focus on industry and social mobility. In REF2021, our research was recognised as world leading.

In 2022/23, HESA (2024) data shows 76% of NTU colleagues were employed in the 'teaching only' category. These colleagues comprise those employed on both the Teaching and Scholarship (T&S) and the Teaching and Practice pathways. Our focus is the T&S pathway, which we have revised recently to ensure inclusivity.

Sector-wide, scholarship is contested and promotions criteria in different institutions emphasise different aspects of scholarly activity (Gann & Hulme, under review). This has traditionally led to challenges for teaching-focused staff in a) knowing what is required of them, and b) transferring between institutions (Smith & Walker, 2021). We therefore determined to create a broad and inclusive set of criteria to recognise diverse forms of teaching and scholarship success.

Through a small working group, comprising senior T&S academics, university leadership, and human resources, we produced criteria that enabled colleagues to create a flexible narrative around five core components, evidencing performance at threshold level in all five, and strength in three. The five components are:

- 1 Teaching design and practice
- 2 Leadership and management in education
- 3 Educational innovation, application, and change
- 4 Influence, external recognition, and esteem
- 5 Collegiality, collaboration, and professional development.

What is working well?

The new criteria were introduced for promotion to Associate Professor in 2022, and Professor in 2023. They have enabled us already to recognise and promote colleagues with diverse career profiles.

We have integrated external recognition schemes – such as HEA fellowships, National Teaching Fellowships, Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence, and recognition by Professional and Subject Related Bodies, allowing colleagues to evidence the esteem in which they are held, whilst encouraging engagement with such schemes. We encompassed internal recognition schemes (e.g. NTU's Vice-Chancellors' awards for excellence in teaching and excellence in scholarship) which develop confidence, provide evidence of excellence within the institution, and create a pipeline to external awards.

At NTU, we value our colleagues' service to the institution, and wanted to encourage and recognise this through promotions. Educational leadership and citizenship were emphasised in the criteria to enable this. As well as enabling reward for service such as programme leadership, we recognised generosity and collegiality in such forms as mentoring, developing inclusive practices, and building scholarly communities.

Since the launch of the new criteria there has been a substantial increase in applications for both associate professor and professor on the T&S pathway in the first year of both schemes. Feedback from promotions panels and colleagues putting themselves forward for promotion has been extremely positive. The criteria are appreciated for their move towards an inclusive definition of scholarship, rather than focusing on research metrics as is typically seen across the sector. They embody our institutional values around Excellence, Developing Our People, being Respectful, and being Creative and Ambitious.

Reflections and future directions

Developing criteria for promotion on the T&S pathway which enable scholarship identity to be freely articulated gives colleagues opportunities to shape their careers in new ways whilst aligning with institutional values. The successful development of our T&S pathway has inspired further revisions of other academic promotions pathways at NTU.

Embedding the new structure and its components is a work in progress. Future plans include building and aligning the appraisal system to ensure a smooth translation for staff between appraisal and promotion. To do this, we need to provide support for line-managers in developing knowledge and understanding of our new T&S criteria, to increase mentoring capacity, and to provide added support to cold-spots in the university where there is less of a tradition of scholarship. Growing capacity is an important foundation for this, and we hope to see our newly promoted Associate Professors and Professors taking on increasing responsibilities for supporting T&S career development across the university in the future.

References

Gann, R.J. & Hulme, J.A. Scholarship reimagined: Creating the DARSHE, an inclusive and flexible model for scholarship in higher education. Manuscript submitted to *Higher Education*.

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