Academic Planning and Performance Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) is committed to sourcing, recruiting, developing, and retaining skilled, experienced, and high-performing staff. Planning and performance is an important and effective process to engage staff and align their work with the broader University priorities and objectives.

(2) This policy supports The University of Newcastle Academic Staff and Teachers Enterprise Agreement (Enterprise Agreement).

Section 2 - Policy Intent

(3) This policy provides the principles and criteria that underpin academic staff performance reviews and regular conversations between supervisors and their staff.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to all academic staff, except for casual staff members.

(5) The principles and criteria defined in this policy will also apply to a staff member on a probationary period and be in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

Section 4 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document:

   a. "academic staff" means an academic employee of the University of Newcastle who is engaged through an employment contract that is not defined as casual employment.

Section 5 - General Policy Principles

(7) Staff must perform their duties in accordance with the principles as set out in the Staff Code of Conduct.

(8) The University is committed to providing an equal opportunity environment for its staff and will assess performance through the principle of performance relative to opportunity. The quality of the staff member's performance will be assessed against the standard for the academic level. Consideration will be given to the expectations for activity and output considering the fraction at which the academic staff member is employed, periods of absence, and/or personal circumstances.

(9) Academic achievement must be aligned with the University's Strategic Plan and performance will be assessed and rewarded where it contributes to the achievement of the University's strategic vision and priorities.

Section 6 - Academic Performance and Planning

(10) The supervisor (or their nominee) of an academic staff member will conduct at least one (1) planning and performance every twelve (12) months.

(11) As part of the discussion and in accordance with Clause 6.1 of the [Enterprise Agreement](#), planning and performance will cover:

- a. planning and goal setting, including documented 3-year research plans and future contributions in the domains of teaching and engagement;
- b. performance feedback;
- c. review of achievements; and
- d. development activities undertaken and future opportunities.

(12) The purpose of planning and goal setting is to:

- a. define the key academic achievement areas (the activities, goals, actions, and conduct) for which the staff member will be held accountable during the review period; and
- b. define how the staff member's achievements will be measured in the key achievement areas.

(13) The purpose of planning and performance is to assess the staff member's achievements during the review period, provide feedback, and to prepare achievement goals and a development plan for the next review period.

(14) To support staff improvement, an academic staff member may be placed on a performance improvement plan, in accordance with Clause 7 of the [Enterprise Agreement](#), to be reviewed by the relevant Head of School and College Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(15) Participation in annual planning and performance processes are a prerequisite for applying for an academic promotion and for participation in the [Special Studies Program](#).

(16) Supervisors and their nominees will undertake training in planning and performance conversations.

Five-year Review

(17) Level E academic staff are expected to make a significant contribution to the leadership of the organisational unit and the University through their research, teaching, scholarship of teaching and learning, and engagement with the expected quality and impact of work to increase with experience.

(18) Planning and performance for Level E academic staff will include a comprehensive review of the Level E staff member's academic achievements, future goals, and progress towards these goals every five (5) years.

(19) The purpose of the five-year review is to promote professional development and demonstrate leadership in achieving the University's vision and strategic priorities, including identifying future candidates for nomination as Laureate Professor, in accordance with the [Appointment as Laureate Professor Policy](#).

(20) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the five-year review, including facilitating peer review as part of the process.

Criteria for Academic Achievement

(21) Academic achievement is categorised within three (3) main academic domains and is relative to opportunity:

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Page 2 of 7

a. research;

b. teaching; and

c. engagement.

(22) Evidence of activity and quality must:

a. substantiate achievement across the three academic domains;

b. support the University's strategic objectives;

c. align with the activities described in the Foundations for Inspiring People (Academic Staff); and

d. align with the University of Newcastle Position Classification Standards – Academic Staff defined in the [Enterprise Agreement](#).

(23) Foundations for Inspiring People (Academic Staff) and the position classification standards described in the [Enterprise Agreement](#) list the broad categories of responsibilities for academic staff and a range of academic performance indicators that acknowledges the diversity of academic achievement, but are not an exhaustive list of academic activities.

(24) The University recognises there are a wide range of activities which academic staff may be expected to undertake, and a wide range of groups with whom staff members may interact as part of their academic roles. These interactions may be internal contributions to the University community or external to the profession and wider community.

(25) The patterns of academic activity vary widely across academic categories and disciplines. While there are common elements, the University recognises that the balance between them may be quite different depending on the discipline.

(26) Research activities will vary depending on the discipline. Research effort and research performance must not be confused. The University would expect an academic staff member to be allocated sufficient time to research, usually over a period of three (3) years to be considered research active.

(27) Colleges are responsible for determining research-focussed definitions and minimum thresholds of performance for an academic staff member to be considered research active within the College.

(28) The criteria for academic achievement, key performance indicators described in Foundations for Inspiring People (Academic Staff), and the position classification standards described in the [Enterprise Agreement](#) provide the basis for the evaluation of performance.

(29) The Academic Dashboard provides additional quantitative metrics that evidence achievement across the three academic domains relative to individual performance and an academic's peers to further evaluate performance.

Teaching and Research Roles

(30) A Teaching and Research academic will contribute predominantly to teaching and research, based on the general principle of 40:40:20 in accordance with the Academic Staff and Teachers [Enterprise Agreement](#).

(31) As an exception, the Head of School may approve an alternative ratio of teaching, research, and engagement for an individual academic staff member.

Level A

(32) Generally, Level A academic staff are developing their careers and will work with the support and guidance of more senior academic staff. A Level A academic is expected to have an emerging profile in teaching and in disciplinary research.

(33) Academic achievement for a Level A academic may be defined across the three (3) academic domains as follows:

a. Research: formulating a coherent research program, working within a research group (where relevant), participating in applications for competitive research grants and publishing or exhibiting in high-quality outlets, often in collaboration with colleagues, consistent with their discipline.

b. Teaching: achieving teaching quality as indicated by internal and external surveys and outcomes for students that will improve or innovate in response to feedback. Preparing and delivering lectures, presenting tutorials, seminars, practical classes, demonstrations, workshops, student field excursions, clinical sessions and studio sessions.

c. Engagement: demonstrating efficient performance in allocated internal roles, sharing academic service responsibilities, contributing to outcomes of internal committees, and beginning to develop external collaborations.

Level B

(34) In addition to the requirements at Level A, a Level B Teaching and Research academic will have a growing profile in teaching, research, and engagement.

(35) Academic achievement for a Level B academic may be defined across the three (3) academic domains as follows:

a. Research: an established record of publication or non-traditional research output in high-quality outlets. Achieving national recognition in their discipline and taking a Chief Investigator role (often in conjunction with more experienced Researchers) in applications for external research funds.

b. Teaching: contributing at undergraduate, honours and postgraduate levels, taking responsibility for the preparation and delivery of course modules and coordinating one or more courses, including collaboration in curriculum design and delivery where appropriate. It is expected that a Level B academic will have diverse teaching portfolios, covering several units of study and sometimes over several courses.

c. Engagement: demonstrating efficient performance in allocated internal service roles and actively building external collaborations.

Level C

(36) In addition to the requirements at Level B, a Level C Teaching and Research academic will have an established record of achievement in research, teaching, and engagement.

(37) Academic achievement for a Level C academic may be defined across the three (3) academic domains as follows:

a. Research: demonstrating a capacity for independent research; contributing as a Chief Investigator including collaborations which create new insights and opportunities and successfully managing significant external research funds. A Level C academic will have a developing international profile for research in their field through publication or non-traditional research output in high quality outlets and, where relevant, by the impact of their research on policy, practice and/or commercialisation. It is expected that a Level C academic will have an active and effective record of primary supervision of Higher Degree by Research candidates with timely completions.

b. Teaching: demonstrating leadership in learning and teaching activities, having a central role in course and curriculum development, and peer mentoring.

c. Engagement: demonstrating outstanding performance in a range of higher-level internal duties, providing a strong contribution to external activities, and developing international collaborations.

Level D

(38) In addition to the requirements at Level C, a Level D Teaching and Research academic will demonstrate excellence in research, teaching and engagement and have a sustained record of outstanding impact and achievement that is internationally recognised in either research or teaching.

(39) Academic achievement for a Level D academic may be defined across the three (3) academic domains as follows:

a. Research: demonstrating quality and impact of their work through publication or exhibition in internationally recognised outlets, and, where relevant, through its impact on policy, practice and/or commercialisation. A Level D academic will have a record of successful applications for external research funding in a Chief Investigator role and mentoring more junior academic staff and Researchers. It is also expected that a Level D academic will have an active and effective record of supervising Higher Degree by Research candidates successfully to timely completion as the primary supervisor.

b. Teaching: demonstrating strategic leadership in the planning and delivery of curriculum, which where relevant may include clinical teaching. A Level D academic will be recognised as a 'content specialist' within their College, teaching in specialist areas across courses and disciplines as appropriate.

c. Engagement: making a strong contribution to the governance of the University, including successful mentoring of more junior academic staff. Leading and forming strategic partnerships between the University and industry/government and other stakeholders nationally and internationally.

Level E

(40) In addition to the requirements at Level D, a Level E Teaching and Research academic will demonstrate excellence and a high level of leadership in research, teaching, and engagement. A Level E academic will be recognised internationally for their scholarly contribution and for its impact on policy or practice.

(41) Academic achievement for a Level E academic may be defined across the three (3) academic domains as follows:

a. Research: demonstrating outstanding outcomes and leadership. Guiding the development of more junior Researchers, leading major funding initiatives, making significant contributions to knowledge and the beneficial application of knowledge, and intellectual leadership beyond the specific area of research or creative activity.

b. Teaching: a distinguished record of scholarly teaching and leadership across all levels and appropriate contexts, including clinical teaching where appropriate. Actively developing educational policy and curriculum areas within the discipline.

c. Engagement: making a significant contribution to the governance of the University, including developing policy and providing leadership in community activities in professional, commercial, and industrial sectors at a national and international level.

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Casual employment" - Has the meaning given in section 15A of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and as supplemented by the relevant Enterprise Agreement.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Level B academic" - Lecturer

"Level C academic" - Senior Lecturer.

"Level D academic" - Associate Professor.

"Level E academic" - Professor.

"Postgraduate" - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Undergraduate" - Refers to any qualification up to and including the level of a Bachelor Honours degree.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

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Page 6 of 7

"Level A academic" - Associate Lecturer

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Page 7 of 7