

Institutional promotions guide

In-role grade promotion guidance 2024, University grades 5-9

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NCAS commitment

NCAS is committed to supporting promotions on merit and will fund the related pay increase when a promotion is approved. The aim of this document is to openly share the different routes to promotion and offer support to apply, in response to the 2022 and 2024 staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion surveys.

We are in the process of negotiating NCAS input to all host promotions policies/processes to ensure a clear understanding of NCAS context and job roles and fair and accessible reward/recognition for our staff.

Introduction to the promotions guide

This guide focuses mainly on university based, academic, research and technical role promotions as these tend to vary from institution to institution and be more complex than support, and professional and managerial promotion applications.

Professorial promotions have a separate process. [Please contact the People Team for any queries with these.](#)

Applying for a promotion

Applying for a grade promotion can be a lengthy process and is similar in structure to a job application with evidence of performing above your current job grade. This may include providing a full C.V. and references. There is an expectation that colleagues will use some of their own time to write a promotion application. Please speak to your manager to negotiate a claim for a proportion of your time back.

Promotion applications should be made through the host institution process. This varies from organisation to organisation and from grade to grade but should follow broadly similar systems. Please note that for some institutions, the manager applies on behalf of the colleague and puts forward the request for the promotion.

Institutional promotion processes often require evidence of leadership, and teaching, tutoring or outreach, depending on the role. If you are interested in development opportunities in these areas please speak to your line manager, NCAS manager, or the People Team. In some cases, you may need to provide evidence of teaching in your promotion application. At first glance, this may seem problematic if your NCAS role is either primarily or exclusively research focused. However NCAS offers plenty of opportunities to gain teaching experience for example:

- Developing and/or delivering courses, workshops and sessions as part of the NCAS Atmospheric Science Training programme
- Mentoring
- Delivering lunchtime seminars
- Supervising PhD students
- Supporting students on research placements

We are working to ensure recognition of these roles at host institutions. A reference from NCAS may be of benefit for specific roles.

There are links to host institution examples and guidance in the [Host university promotions processes](#) section of this document. [For further advice and support please contact the People Team.](#)

NCAS is aware that being on a fixed term contract can have an impact on access to promotions through limiting the opportunity to lead on key projects. The use of these contracts is being reviewed as a priority.

The People Team can provide support in identifying a suitable colleague to provide a reference for a promotion application as well as suggesting a mentor to discuss any specific barriers.

Support from managers

Managers should discuss performance against current job grade, development opportunities, readiness for promotion and the currency and relevance of job descriptions as part of the annual review process.

Managers should make themselves aware of the promotions process and criteria such as 'outputs' for their host institution in order to effectively support staff, especially those in 'non-traditional roles.' Information and support is available from local HR teams.

Development support will be provided to NCAS line managers to ensure effective use of annual reviews to support their direct reports.

If you are not clear about who your NCAS line manager is [please contact the People Team](#).

Pay grades and spinal column points

The way grades are numbered can vary between institutions. Please bear this in mind when comparing similar NCAS roles and associated grades across certain host institutions. Spinal column points (SCP), which make up the nationally-recognised single pay, are very similar for all university partners, therefore using SCP may be the best way to compare like for like roles. Similar NCAS roles should have equivalent SCP.

For example, In Reading, Grade 6 would be someone just starting a postdoc role following their PhD, equivalent to the NCAS research scientist. However, in Leeds this type of role would be a Grade 7, meaning a Reading Grade 6 is roughly the same as a Leeds Grade 7 in terms of type of role, level of responsibilities and salary.

[Please view the summary of the grading structures across all NCAS partner universities.](#)

Research roles across the different sites are likely to have core expectations for promotions, such as evidence of leadership, collaboration, project management and independence. The panel will expect a clear and concise narrative with demonstration of expertise in defined areas as well as citations, strategic links and impact of work.

Job categories

Job categories vary and this can impact on the promotions application process. The main job categories are:

- Support (administration and clerical)
- Professional and Managerial
- Research
- Academic/Teaching
- Technical

It can be possible to move between job categories, depending on your job role, which could make applying for a promotion more straightforward. Please seek advice on the promotions route best suited to your job category. Colleagues have applied through technical rather than research routes for example where appropriate. For example, some NCAS roles are split between research and technical categories, which creates particular challenges. [Please contact the People Team if you need support with this issue or have identified effective solutions.](#)

Technical roles

At some institutions such as the University of York, technical and support staff need to undergo a role review rather than a promotion application. The details are contained in the link under the York section later in the document.

The University of Reading is doing some work on 'technical roles' and access to promotions.

[NCAS CMS colleagues at Reading have developed a role profile for computational scientists at different grades to support this.](#) It is called 'Computational Scientist Representative Work Activities'. [Please contact Grenville Lister for further information on CMS.](#)

[For any other questions or advice please contact the People Team.](#)

Personal Circumstances Statement, to include in promotion applications

Some, but not all, institutions give you the opportunity to describe/explain any leave of absence that may have reduced your productivity.

Please use a personal circumstances statement, if available, to describe any caring responsibilities, parental leave or disability/ health issues which may have impacted on your work within the usual time frame. The details of your personal circumstances are not shared with the promotions panel but should support the panel in making a fair decision.

Useful information to include is:

- The period of time impacted;
- How the particular personal circumstances impacted your ability to do your job / produce the required outputs for that period of time and;
- Which promotion assessment criteria (where these exist) the impact of the individual or collective personal circumstances relate(s) to.

Where you hold a part time or fractional appointment, you should clearly identify how the part-time nature of the appointment has impacted your ability to meet the required promotion criteria e.g. reduced number of publications produced, reduced opportunity to present at conferences.

Example scenarios include:

- Someone with dyslexia stating that reading/writing takes disproportionately more time for them compared to their peers, impacting the writing of papers and proposals, and the completion of administrative tasks.
- Someone who has taken parental leave, or chosen to work part time. Record a simple statement of the dates, and a request that the publication track record should be weighted accordingly. Similarly for extended leave due to ill health.

Host University promotions processes

We have provided promotions process information for the following NCAS host universities:

- [University of Birmingham](#)
- [University of Cambridge](#)
- [University of East Anglia](#)
- [University of Leeds \(including FAAM and Met Office staff\)](#)
- [University of Manchester](#)
- [University of Oxford](#)
- [University of Reading](#)
- [Science and Technology Facilities Council](#)
- [University of St. Andrews](#)
- [University of Surrey](#)
- [University of York](#)

University of Birmingham

Birmingham has a range of processes depending on the grade of role. [Information on academic promotions can be found on the HR website via the University of Birmingham intranet.](#) The [academic career framework](#) has also been revised and provides further information on the promotions process and career progression.

The HR contact for NCAS staff at Birmingham is [Helen Barlow](#).

University of Cambridge

Cambridge is in the process of updating the promotions application process for all levels, updates will be provided in due course. (Autumn 2025)

The HR contact for NCAS staff at Cambridge is [Howard Jones](#).

The role of Senior Research Associate (the level above Research Associate) is dealt with at a Faculty level.

Updated June 2025

There is no online documentation for the process to apply for Senior Research Associate. Promotion applications for this level go to the Faculty Board, which meets twice per term. Applications go to [Howard Jones](#).

HR needs a copy of the applicant's CV, publication list and two references, one of which can be from the site lead, and the other must be external to the department (preferably but not necessarily external to the university). The references must emphasise their current role, not achievements in any previous role.

As this is promotion to a higher grade, the Faculty Board look at not only length of service or excellence in research (e.g. a decent publications list, etc.), but project management (e.g. involvement in writing proposals/reports, supervision of more junior staff), and recognition outside the Department (e.g. member of discussion groups). No personal statement is needed. A brief cover letter comes from Howard or the Head of Department, which they usually draft using the information in the references.

The discretionary/merit award system is in place for reward within current grade.

[Luke Abraham](#), Research Scientist and Training Programme Lead, who has had 3 successful promotions applications, is willing to offer informal advice and support on the process at Cambridge.

[Please find an overview of various University of Cambridge reward schemes on the HR website.](#)

University of East Anglia

The University of East Anglia is currently updating the promotion process for their institution. Updated information will be provided as soon as we have it available.

University of Leeds

[The promotions process for non-academic staff at the university can be found on the HR website.](#)

Updated June 2025

The HR contact for NCAS staff at Leeds is [Sarah Sajid](#) or Roona Ohwoisi-Swinton
E.R.Ohwoisi-Swinton@leeds.ac.uk

Please contact the NCAS People Team for advice on applications and job descriptions before submitting an application.

[Lisa Banton](#), Head of People, EDI and Workforce Development, has recently been awarded a promotion from grade 8 to 9 through the Professional and Managerial route and is happy to support colleagues through the process at the University of Leeds.

The formal institution process for non-academic promotions, e.g. Support/ Professional/Managerial and Technical is outlined below:

- Line Manager and relevant NCAS Director will need to agree that a higher-level role is required in the structure at the new grade;
- Job description updated and duties agreed with Line Manager;
- Job description sent to [Faculty HR](#) for role analysis;
- Once grade is confirmed, Line Manager to liaise with the NCAS People team who will prepare and submit a University Pre-Authorisation form (PAF);
- Running parallel to this, the member of staff to complete a promotion application;
- Once complete, the promotion application and updated JD should be sent to the NCAS Operations Director, who will complete Section 5 (Verification), and then forward to promotions@leeds.ac.uk ,cc the Faculty HR Officer FOEHR@leeds.ac.uk
- The promotions team will set up a panel date or a desktop analysis to review the promotion application;
- The central HR team writes to individuals to confirm promotion if awarded.

[The academic promotions process can be found on the HR webpages. Please follow the links for the Faculty of Environment for faculty specific information.](#)

FAAM colleagues at our Cranfield University site, and staff at the Met Office, apply for promotions through the University of Leeds process.

Updated June 2025

[Hannah Price](#), Science Partnerships Lead at FAAM, is happy to provide advice and a sample contextual statement to support promotion applications by FAAM colleagues.

University of Manchester

[The promotions guide for Manchester NCAS staff can be found on the StaffNet webpages.](#)

The HR contact for NCAS staff at Manchester is [Benita Jackson](#).

At Manchester, colleagues are offered the opportunity to improve their original submission following feedback.

The Promotion of Academics policy is currently being reviewed to accompany the launch of the new and revised academic promotions criteria and guidance for 2024/2025.

An updated policy will be linked in due course.

University of Oxford

At Oxford the promotions process is described as a regrade. [Details of this promotion process can be found on the University of Oxford HR website.](#)

University of Reading

For personal titles promotions, there is an annual process requiring an application via the School in early January and notification of outcomes in June, with successful awards to commence in August.

[Academic promotions guidance for the year 2024/25 at Reading.](#)

[Role profiles have been provided to support applications for professional and managerial roles at Reading.](#)

Updated June 2025

[There is a different process for postdoctoral researchers.](#)

The HR contact for NCAS staff at Reading is [Rachel Thorns](#).

[A sample contextual statement for associate professors from Reading is available to view.](#)

Citizenship categories are compulsory, and you then mix and match a combination of Research and Teaching categories depending on your contract type. Most NCAS staff will be choosing primarily Research categories.

Other examples of contextual statements for Reading are available on request.

Science and Technology Facilities Council

The scheme for researchers at the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) is the [UK Research and Innovation Individual Merit Promotion scheme](#). For non-research staff promotion opportunities may become available through the creation of new job roles with competitive appointment.

STFC have a temporary acting up arrangement for internal colleagues exceeding their responsibilities and meeting the expectations of a higher band. This can be made permanent, outside of the STFC promotions board if evidence is provided.

HR contact for the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and the Centre for Environmental Data Services is [Zoe Davies](#).

University of St. Andrews

The University of St. Andrews has now joined the NCAS community. [The information for academic promotions at grades 6 and above are described on the University website.](#)

Please contact Human Resources for information and queries relating to the promotions process at St Andrews: promotions@st-andrews.ac.uk or +44 (0)1334 461999.

University of Surrey

Updated June 2025

[Information on professional development and promotions can be found on the University website.](#)

Please contact the following for information and queries relating to the promotions process at Surrey: HROperations@surrey.ac.uk, OneSurreyNR@surrey.ac.uk, or employeebenefits@surrey.ac.uk.

University of York

The promotions process is currently suspended at York but is expected to re-open in autumn 2025.

[The academic promotions process at The University of York is explained in detail on the HR promotion webpages.](#)

This includes the relevant criteria and examples of successful applications. The University of York also offers webinars and training courses for colleagues considering applying for promotions, which are advertised both via emails to all York staff and on the promotions webpages annually when the promotion call opens (typically in October).

The Department of Chemistry also has relevant examples of successful promotion applications that they are able to share with candidates, and will also run an annual promotions seminar with Q&A.

The Department of Chemistry acknowledges that it can be difficult for Grade 6 staff to navigate the process and to judge whether they might be ready to put in a promotion application.

In response to this, the Department offers all research, teaching and scholarship staff on Grade 6 contracts to have a short CV informally reviewed by an independent panel from within Chemistry. You don't have to feel 'ready' for promotion, you can use this 'light-touch' process as an opportunity to get advice.

Please note that the department has recently confirmed that grade 7 staff can act as Principal Investigators on grant applications.

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[Find out more information and apply now if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity.](#)

As promotion requires Departmental Head of Department approval, [please contact the Chemistry Department](#) before submitting an application.

[Academic promotion guidance for York can be found on the university HR webpages.](#)

[Technical and support staff follow a 'review' process. Find out more information on this evaluation and review process on the university HR webpages.](#)

Please contact the shared HR contact address for general promotions information:
hr-operations@york.ac.uk.

Please contact the academic promotions team for guidance on academic promotions applications: academic-promotions@york.ac.uk

Please note that NCAS is in the process of establishing a Relationship Agreement with our host institutions which should make applying for promotions clearer and more accessible.

[Please contact the People Team to feedback on your experience and any successes.](#)