

Gazette Supplement



Consultation on the possible wider use of the title of professor, and on merit pay for titular professors

The Personnel Committee is consulting all divisional boards, the Continuing Education Board, Academic Services and University Collections (ASUC), and all colleges and the Conference of Colleges, the Joint Consultative Committee with the Oxford UCU, and individual members of Congregation on certain aspects of the above issues.

The text of the consultative paper is set out below. Individual members of Congregation are invited to submit responses to Jeremy Whiteley (jeremy.whiteley@admin.ox.ac.uk) by **22 April**.

Summary

1 Council has agreed that it is now timely to lift the suspension of the University's various arrangements for salary review and merit pay. This paper is concerned specifically with the arrangements for academic staff, though the suspension will be lifted for all staff groups.

2 Council has agreed that there should be an exercise to consider distinction awards for statutory professors and readers, with any additional payments to take effect from 1 October 2013. It is intended that such exercises will in future be held on a regular basis as was the case before the six-year period of suspension. Details of the next exercise will be sent direct to eligible individuals in due course.

3 In addition, Council has agreed that a recognition of distinction exercise should be held in 2013–14 to consider applications for the award of the title of professor; such exercises will in future be held annually,

under streamlined arrangements.

4 The most recent recognition of distinction exercise, launched in 2010, was run without funding, and so there was no opportunity then to provide the pay increments for selected titular professors according to the newly accepted combined system for titles and merit pay for academics – see the proposals of the Task Force on Academic Employment: www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2009-10/supps/1_4915.pdf.

5 By contrast, on this occasion (and in subsequent exercises), it will be possible to fund a pay increment for lecturers with the title of professor: the results of the next recognition of distinction exercise will be known by the summer of 2014, with pay increments to take effect from 1 October 2014.

6 Before launching that exercise, the Personnel Committee wishes to consult widely on two possible variations to the combined system for titles and for merit pay.

Consultation

7 This paper seeks views

(a) on a suggestion that the grade of lecturer (university lecturer, university lecturer (medical), CUF lecturer, faculty lecturer, ULNTF) should in future become the grade of associate professor; and

(b) on a proposal that with effect from 2014–15 all non-medical lecturers (UL, CUF, faculty lecturers, ULNTFs) in post who have the title of full professor should receive an additional salary payment of £2,600 per annum (unless they already receive additional recruitment

or retention payments at that level or above) and that they should all then become eligible for consideration in subsequent exercises for professorial distinction awards (in contrast to the task force's view that this salary increment and access to professorial distinction awards should be reserved to a selected subset of lecturers with the title of professor).

Possible wider use of the title of professor

8 When it reported in 2010, the task force discussed the possibility that all lecturers might in future hold the title of professor. It noted that, at a Discussion in Congregation on 18 November 2008, there had been considerable interest in the suggestion that in future all Oxford lecturers with tenure might hold the title of professor, and, following that Discussion, the task force held a further round of consultation, including consultation on that particular point. The arguments for and against such a change were summarised in the task force's report (see www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2009-10/supps/1_4915.pdf, paragraphs 22–5). At that time, the task force and Council agreed that the arguments against outweighed those in favour. They recognised, however, that the issue might need to be further considered by Congregation; and, following initial discussions in divisional boards and the Personnel Committee in 2012, Council has agreed that the question of the possible wider use of the title should indeed now be definitively resolved by Congregation.

9 A possible model for the wider use of the title, and a rationale for its possible introduction, are set out below. The Personnel Committee and Council

[†]These bodies are being asked to consult their constituent units (departments, faculties etc) before responding.

emphasise that they are not at this stage formally proposing such a change, but rather seeking views on the proposal: if the proposal attracts support in the current consultation, a formal resolution will be put to Congregation to enable a final decision to be made on this matter.

Possible new model for the wider use of the title of professor

10 Appointments at the current substantive lecturer level (university lecturer, university lecturer (medical), CUF lecturer, faculty lecturer, ULNTF) would in future normally be made to the grade of 'associate professor', with the proviso that appointees who had not previously held a substantive academic appointment would be made assistant professor in the first instance and become associate professor on achieving reappointment to retiring age.

11 Assistant and associate professors would be able to use the appellation of 'Professor' if they wished, though that they held post as assistant or associate professor would be clear in written correspondence and publications.

12 While the grade of lecturer would be abolished, the current differences between CUFs, ULTFs, ULNTFs, faculty lectureships and university lectureships (medical), in terms of basic stipendiary arrangements and duties, would be maintained.

13 Vacancies would be advertised as associate professorships, with a description of the University's use of professorial titles being set out in further particulars.

14 All existing CUF, ULTF, faculty, and ULNTF lecturers and university lecturers (medical) who had not gained titular professorships would be appropriately restyled as assistant or associate professors (unless the postholders preferred that no change should be made). Those lecturers on whom the title of reader was conferred under previous arrangements would be at liberty to retain that title and/or to use the title of associate professor.

15 Associate professors would be eligible for consideration through the recognition of distinction exercise for award of the title of full professor, equating precisely in status to titular professorships as currently awarded under the recognition of distinction exercises. This possibility for career progression should be indicated in the further particulars for associate professorships, but it should be made clear that such promotion in status would be dependent on merit and would not normally

occur until some years after reappointment to retirement.

16 As now, the title of full professor might be awarded on appointment in acute recruitment cases, or after appointment in acute retention cases.

17 Any existing substantive readers and all research staff in the highest (professorial-equivalent) research grades who do not have the title of professor would also be able to use the title of associate professor if they wished. The arrangements for clinical readers and clinical readerships would be for discussion with the Medical Sciences Board; and the arrangements for the most senior curatorial posts would be for discussion with ASUC.

18 The new arrangements would not apply to clinical lecturers, departmental lecturers, or research staff below the professorial-equivalent grades, but individuals in all of those grades would, as now, be eligible to apply for conferment of the title of professor under the recognition of distinction exercise; and they would also be eligible to apply to the divisional board for the conferment of the title of assistant or associate professor.

Rationale for this possible change

19 The present consultation is being undertaken by Personnel Committee bearing in mind, in particular, two factors to which the task force may have given insufficient weight.

20 First, it has been argued that while the task force may have been correct to propose that the title and grade of *reader* should be abolished since it was not widely understood internationally, the same is true of the title of university lecturer. This has significant consequences for our ability to recruit internationally into what remains the main academic grade at Oxford. Recruitment within the UK is also hampered, because those at other UK universities whom we wish to recruit to our lectureships frequently already hold professorial positions. It is vitally important that we make the best possible appointments to posts at the current lecturer level, and the current nomenclature means that many suitably qualified candidates worldwide assume that these are junior positions and do not even consider applying for them. It is misleading for the issue to be discussed in terms of Oxford's moving to the North American or US model; what is at stake is rather the development of an approach at Oxford which might be better understood across the globe, and which reflects the high quality of those already in,

and those who in future we wish to recruit into, the current lecturer grade here.

21 Second, it has been argued that 'devaluation of the currency' would not occur if initial appointment to the current lecturer grade came with the title of *associate* professor (and if appointees who had not previously held an academic position bore the title of *assistant* professor until they were reappointed to the retiring age). There would be a further step, normally after reappointment to the retiring age, to the title of full professor, and the criteria for that would remain as under the current recognition of distinction arrangements. Moreover, the distinction between those at the current lecturer level with the title of professor, and those holding substantive chairs, would be maintained; referring to the latter as 'the "[named]" or "Statutory" Professor of X' would preserve this further gradation.

22 Overall it is argued that permitting all University lecturers to use a professorial title would provide an appropriate means of recognising the general distinction of Oxford's senior academic staff. It would enable them to function more effectively in various national and international contexts – including grant application processes, appointment to major bodies, and the writing of references for students – by giving them a formal status more commensurate with their standing. In effect, it is argued that the current use of the grade of university lecturer for the majority of Oxford's senior academic roles significantly undervalues the general distinction of those holding them.

23 In summary, this wider use of the title of professor could help recruitment, help retention, and improve morale among those in the Oxford career grade, while preserving standards and maintaining a distinction between those with the title of assistant professor, those with the title of associate professor, those with the title of full professor, and those holding substantive professorships.

Merit pay for academics

24 In 2012, the Task Force on Academic Employment recommended that at the beginning of each budget cycle relevant University bodies all be routinely reminded to consider the scope for additional focused investment in improving academic terms and conditions (alongside other top priorities). The first annual review since the task force's 2012 report has now taken place, and Council has considered a range of

proposals in relation to the reward of merit among the University's staff on the basis of recommendations from the Personnel and Planning and Resource Allocation Committees (and in the light of separate consideration of certain elements of the proposals by its external members, given the personal interest of some internal members of Council in academic salary matters).

25 In this context, Council is minded to provide that with effect from 2014–15 all non-medical lecturers (UL, CUF, faculty lecturers, ULNTFs) in post who have the title of full professor should receive an additional salary payment of £2,600 per annum (unless they already receive additional recruitment or retention payments at that level or above) and should all become eligible for consideration in subsequent exercises for professorial distinction awards². The Personnel Committee now seeks views on that proposal.

26 The additional payment would be implemented after the completion of the next general recognition of distinction exercise, which it is envisaged will have a deadline for applications in Michaelmas term 2013, with final decisions being made in Trinity term 2014.

27 New arrangements for recognition of distinction are being developed by the Personnel Committee, involving annual exercises designed (in the light of the experience of the last round) to ensure that applications are dealt with more quickly within procedures and against criteria which are more transparent and more widely understood: the revised arrangements will be published on the Personnel Services website in due course.

28 In the combined system of titles and merit pay for academics adopted in 2010, the task force envisaged that only a subset of lecturers with the title of professor would receive additional payments, in cash-limited, competitive exercises, and would then become eligible for professorial distinction awards. The task force was clear, though, in stating that its overall intention was to 'maximise the numbers of lecturers who might benefit' from salary progression and to guarantee 'that merit pay for lecturers is available equitably across the University', with decisions on how much to spend on

implementing the new system being taken by Council in the light of available resources.

29 The Personnel Committee, the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, and Council (following separate consideration by its external members) have now taken the view that it would be appropriate to reward through a salary increment from 2014–15 all those lecturers in post who will by then have had the title of professor conferred upon them (in addition to reintroducing professorial distinction exercises and merit pay for academic-related and support staff and to holding recognition of distinction exercises on an annual basis). Extending the basic salary increment to all lecturers with the title of professor avoids the need to make invidious distinctions that would risk undermining morale in the very group of staff chosen as having shown particular academic distinction. The Personnel Committee and Council hope that this proposal will be welcomed.

Responses

30 The Personnel Committee now requests responses from the bodies and individuals addressed in this paper

(a) to the suggestion that the grade of lecturer (university lecturer, university lecturer (medical), CUF lecturer, faculty lecturer, ULNTF) should in future become the grade of associate professor; and

(b) to the proposal that with effect from 2014–15 all non-medical lecturers (university lecturer, CUF lecturer, faculty lecturer, ULNTF) in post who have the title of full professor should receive an additional salary payment of £2,600 per annum (unless they already receive additional recruitment or retention payments at that level or above) and become eligible for consideration in subsequent exercises for professorial distinction awards.

31 Responses should be sent to Jeremy Whiteley (jeremy.whiteley@admin.ox.ac.uk) by **22 April**. Respondents are asked to state whether or not they are content for their replies to be published on the Personnel Services website, and, if so, to provide their replies in electronic form.

Other matters

32 Other main recommendations in the task force's 2012 report are being taken forward as follows, in the light of responses received by the Personnel Committee in a consultative exercise (which responses

will, where respondents so agreed, shortly be published on the Personnel Services website).

33 Proposals for a framework for the **duties** of lecturers and for a framework for the **variation** of those duties at the individual level over time, together with proposals for new arrangements for **research staff** on an academic career trajectory, are being taken forward in the first instance in discussion between the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Personnel and Equality and Education and the heads of division, and will then be discussed between the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Personnel and Equality and Education and college representatives. The hope is to finalise a framework for the variation of individual duties by the end of the current academic year.

34 The issue of **administrative burdens on academic staff** will be discussed between the heads of division and the Registrar and the Deputy Registrar.

35 The **professorial housing scheme** will be reviewed after the current Research Excellence Framework is completed, but in the short term eligibility to apply to the scheme has been extended, in acute recruitment and retention cases, to lecturers/readers without tutorial fellowships and those in the University's most senior research support grade (RSIV), as the task force proposed.

36 Merit pay is being reintroduced in 2013–14 for all academic-related and support staff (the normal annual exercises having being suspended since 2009).

²As envisaged by the task force in 2010, the other University employees who are not in those lecturer posts and on whom the title of professor has been conferred will continue to be covered by separate salary provisions, which already allow for merit pay/upgrading.

