



MEMO

15-04-2026

Re: UCPH promotion programme

KU HR

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1. Background

An attractive, transparent and well-anchored career system is the objective of the University of Copenhagen's academic staff career development programme, which is one of the interdisciplinary initiatives that has been launched in support of the University's strategic effort to attract and retain the best research talents.

The initiative is to help UCPH attract and develop the best national and international scholarly talents by supporting both their academic and career progress as excellent researchers and lecturers. A key element of this is to have an internationally recognisable career programme for associate professors, including a clear career path from associate professor to professor with the option of promotion without advertisement.

Together with the University of Copenhagen and other Danish universities, the Danish Agency for Institutions and Educational Grants (SIU) has discussed the framework for promotion from associate professor¹ to professor without advertisement. The recommendations from the DFIR²

¹ This memo generally concerns 'associate professors'. Please note that senior researchers are included in the same way as associate professors.

² The Danish Research and Innovation Policy Council's (DFiR) report 'Career in Research' from January 2019.

report have been included in the discussions. Under the new job structure³, it is possible to promote an associate professor to professor without advertisement. The job structure provides an overall framework for such a programme, which UCPH and the other universities are to apply locally.

A UCPH model for promotion from associate professor to professor without advertisement has been discussed in the working group for career paths for associate professors and in a sub-group with a couple of members from the working group. The model has been presented to the steering group for academic career development, the Rectorate and the Senior Management Team/LT and has been adjusted accordingly. The model has also been adjusted after two rounds of consultations at UCPH and with contributions from the University Board.

2. Key prerequisites for the promotion programme

The selection and development mechanisms of the promotion programme are designed to ensure the highest possible level of ambition at UCPH in terms of who is admitted to the programme and subsequently promoted. Appointment to professor via the promotion programme is based on the same high academic standard as other professorial appointments.

In order to ensure that the promotion programme contributes to maintaining a high level of academic quality at UCPH, a Rector-appointed faculty board is set up at UCPH level, see details below under *monitoring of the promotion programme* in section 4 regarding the framework for the promotion programme.

3. UCPH model for promotion from associate professor to professor without advertisement

The promotion programme is described on the basis of the model below



³Ministerial order no. 1443 of 11 December 2019

The programme is divided into the following three sections:

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- A. *Entrances* to the promotion programme
- B. *Courses* that are part of the programme
- C. *Final assessment* in connection with transition to professorship.

3. A. Entrances to the promotion programme

The new job structure provides two entrances to the promotion programme; one for particularly talented associate professors and one for particularly talented applicants who apply to the programme directly via open calls.

Entrance to the promotion programme via open calls

A special associate-professor advertisement may be drawn up providing direct access to the promotion programme (associate professor promotion advertisement)⁴. Applicants must enclose a promotion plan in addition to the usual material for application for an associate professorship.

The assessment committee is to assess candidates in relation to the general associate professorship criteria and, in the overall conclusion, assess the candidate's potential in relation to meeting the promotion plan and the professorship criteria.

The process for applying via open calls otherwise follows normal recruitment practices.

Entrance to the promotion programme for already employed associate professors

The option to apply for entrance to the promotion programme as 'particularly talented' is open to all associate professors employed at the University. The selection of which 'particularly talented' associate professors to be included in the promotion programme takes place according to a specific procedure, in order to make it clear to the associate professor on which basis the decision on transition to the promotion programme is made.

⁴ If the intention is to advertise a position with the option to offer employment as a promotion associate professor depending on the applicant's qualifications, this must be clearly stated in the job advertisement. This applies both to combined promotion associate professor/associate professor advertisements and professor/promotion associate professor advertisements.

Procedure for entrance to the promotion programme for already employed associate professors:

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Annual cycle

An annual deadline is set for submitting an application for transition to the promotion programme, with an option to enter the programme outside the normal annual cycle in special situations.

Discussions between deans and heads of department

Entrance to the promotion programme for already employed associate professors requires a preceding dialogue between the head of department and the dean. In this dialogue, the parties must consider both the development of disciplines at the department and which talents that have the potential to represent these disciplines.

This ensures the best foundation for selecting candidates for the promotion programme⁵, and doing it at this point in time will minimise the risk of overburdening the review groups⁶ and of the dean not supporting transition to the promotion programme out of strategic considerations, including considerations regarding organisational and financial conditions or considerations regarding the faculty's focus areas.

Informal discussions with heads of section and/or heads of department

The associate professor may, to their advantage, discuss their promotion plan on an ongoing basis with their head of section and/or head of department before the plan is submitted in writing to the head of department.

Ultimately, it is down to the associate professor to decide whether to submit the promotion plan to the head of department and thereby apply for entrance to the promotion programme.

Application for entrance to the promotion programme goes via the head of department

The associate professor's application for transition to the promotion programme is submitted to the head of department and must contain the following:

⁵ Supportive material will be provided to the management for implementation of the programme.

⁶ The use of review groups is described below.

- A promotion plan based on the University's criteria for recognising merit of professors. The preparation of a promotion plan and the use of criteria will create a common and transparent framework for the selection process. The promotion plan is standardised so as to include all of the University's criteria for recognising merit of professors. The faculties/departments may supplement the criteria with sub-criteria under the main criteria, so that they are also included in the promotion plan and the dossier when this is to be completed.
- CV
- List of publications
- Teaching portfolio
- Suggested external experts for the review group, if relevant

The head of department assesses whether the application should be submitted to the review group and may decide to appoint and, in specific cases, consult a departmental promotion committee.

The head of department decides which applications for transition to the promotion programme should be submitted to the review groups.

In order to support the assessment on which it is based, the head of department may choose to set up – and in specific cases, consult – a departmental promotion committee.

The purpose of the promotion committee is to give the head of department an opportunity to seek academic sparring before the head of department decides on submitting to the review group.

It is up to the individual head of department to decide whether to appoint a departmental promotion committee. Appointing a promotion committee is thus not compulsory, but an option that the head of department may choose to use as desired and needed.

If the head of department chooses to appoint a promotion committee, the committee is appointed as a permanent committee consisting of professors e.g. from the department's research committee.

Once the committee has been appointed, the head of department *may* be advised by the committee in relation to individual applicants where the head of department deems it necessary to do so, for example because the head of department does not believe that he/she has sufficient knowledge of the subject area in question to be able to assess the applicant's potential and whether the application should be submitted to the review group.

The promotion committee thus supports the management and its opinion is advisory in relation to the head of department. After such an advisory

statement, the head of department will continue to make the decision as to whether the application should be submitted to the review group.

The promotion committee's advisory statement must indicate whether the promotion committee recommends submitting to a review group and a brief explanation of their grounds.

The head of department may also, instead of or as a supplement to a statement from the promotion committee, ask for suggestions for whom to include in the review group as external experts.

The head of department appoints review groups and presents the promotion plan to them

In order to ensure relevant support to the head of department, a qualified academic assessment of the associate professor and a transparent procedure, the head of department appoints a review group consisting of the head of department and two external⁷ professors within the relevant subject area. A review group is appointed for each associate professor. The head of department may include the external experts suggested by the promotion committee and by the associate professor.

The review group prepares a statement on the basis of the promotion plan. The statement must indicate whether the review group supports transition to the promotion programme and a brief explanation of its grounds. This is a prerequisite for the associate professor's transition to the promotion programme.

The statement by the review group must be based on the University's professorship criteria. The statement must address the actual promotion plan and the associate professor's potential in regards to fulfilling the plan. The review group must also assess whether the associate professor will be able to meet the professorship criteria by adhering to the plan.

The review group's external experts may not be included in the final assessment and may not be members of the assessment committee in connection with the final assessment.

The head of department presents the review group's statement to the dean

The head of department presents the promotion plan plus any appendices as well as the statement from the review group to the dean, provided that the review group supports transition to the promotion programme and that the associate professor wishes to continue the process.

⁷ 'External' means that the individual in question is not employed at the University.

In dialogue with the heads of department, the dean assesses the statements from the review groups. When deciding on whom to transition to the promotion programme, the dean, together with the heads of department, makes a joint managerial assessment of the individual applications for transition. This assessment includes the review group's statement on the associate professor's potential to meet the professorship criteria and the dean's overall reflections on the development of disciplines across the faculty.

The dean is responsible for quality assurance of the process and to ensure consistency between the faculty's overall strategic plan and selection for the promotion programme.

It should be noted that financial considerations will always form part of decisions taken at the University. It can be difficult to predict the economic situation right until the final assessment (up to eight years ahead), but it is of course important that there is a clear expectation that, in the long term, the position can be funded by the department's own resources⁸.

A. The dean decides on transition to the promotion programme

Associate professors who are approved by the dean for transition to the promotion programme will transition to the programme on a specified date.

Before the transition, the promotion plan is discussed with the head of department again and any adjustments are made on the basis of comments from the review group, if any.

B. The dean decides on non-transition to the promotion programme

Associate professors who are not accepted for transition to the promotion programme will continue in their associate professorship⁹.

The dean's decision is accompanied by a short explanation of the grounds so the associate professor can see the basis on which the decision has been

⁸ If this concerns associate professors who are already permanently employed, the cost will only consist of the difference between an associate-professor salary (typically with a number of supplements) and a professor salary.

⁹ The intention of making it a requirement that the head of department and the dean engage in a preceding dialogue about the development of disciplines at the department prior to presentation to the review group is to minimise the probability of the dean not supporting the transition.

made and the grounds for why the associate professor will not transition to the programme.

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The associate professor may re-apply for transition to the promotion programme for a second and last time at a later stage.

3. B. Course of the programme

The University's promotion programme includes a fixed course prior to the final assessment, which helps to make the process transparent.

Under the new job structure, an associate professor can stay on the promotion programme for a maximum of eight years. However, the duration of the programme should depend on how long the applicant has been employed as an associate professor prior to transition to the promotion programme and their development in other areas. Flexibility in terms of duration should be allowed for the individual associate professor when determining the process prior to the final assessment. However, it is assumed that, generally, the associate professor will stay on the programme for a minimum of two years.

To ensure that the course of the programme does not become unnecessarily heavy or deprives the individual associate professor of the opportunity to work independently with the planning of their own initiatives, only a few central elements of the programme are compulsory.

The following products and elements are compulsory in the promotion programme prior to the final assessment¹⁰:

- Promotion plan
- Promotion dossier
- Annual meeting with the head of department, including evaluation of promotion process and dossier
- Interim evaluation (compulsory only under certain circumstances)

Promotion plan

In addition to providing the basis for the associate professor's application for transition to the promotion programme, see above under section 3.A., the promotion plan must be included in the annual reviews with the head of department and the interim evaluation.

¹⁰ An inspiration catalogue will be drawn up with suggestions for other elements which the faculties may choose to include in the programme.

The dossier provides an assessment and evaluation basis in relation to skills development and the final professorship assessment. The dossier must reflect the criteria for recognising merit of professors in the same way as the promotion plan.

The dossier is maintained and updated continuously as the associate professor achieves new goals and contributes to fulfilling the criteria for recognising merit of professors.

While the promotion plan is a static document, the dossier will be regularly updated by the associate professor.

The dossier will include a description of the following elements:

- Progress in relation to the professorship criteria
- Goals achieved and contributions in relation to the professorship criteria, including teaching portfolio, list of publications, grants, etc.

Annual meeting with the head of department

The head of department and the associate professor meet for an annual interview to discuss the promotion programme. The purpose of the meeting is to give the associate professor a clear sense of whether they are ‘on track’, and is performing within the expected framework. The interim evaluation and the subsequent promotion process are discussed and planned at these meetings.

These annual meetings concerning the promotion plan and the promotion dossier can be scheduled in connection with the annual performance and development review.

Interim evaluation

The interim evaluation is usually initiated after 2-4 years on the promotion programme, provided that the associate professor at that time is not assessed to be ready for the final assessment within the near future. This is decided by the head of department after consultation with the associate professor.

If, prior to this time, it has become clear that the associate professor is ready for the final assessment in the near future, and it therefore serves no purpose to proceed with the interim evaluation, this will be omitted. However, the interim evaluation is initiated if the associate professor after four years on the promotion programme is not ready to begin the final assessment within the near future. The interim evaluation is thus compulsory in cases where,

after four years on the promotion programme, the associate professor is not ready to commence the final assessment within the near future.

The purpose of the interim evaluation is to evaluate the associate professor in relation to the goals of the promotion plan in order to give the associate professor an indication of the particular areas they need to work with to meet the criteria of the final assessment.

It is up to each department to assess how the interim evaluation is best organised in relation to the individual associate professors on the programme. The head of department's assessment is based on dialogue with the associate professor.

The key thing is to give the associate professor an indication of how far they have come in relation to the goals of the promotion programme and to discuss with their head of department the criteria they have to fulfil in the final assessment.

An interim evaluation may replace the annual meeting between the head of department and the associate professor. It is also possible to integrate the interim evaluation in the annual meeting.

An interim evaluation process can also be more comprehensive and, for example, be organised as follows:

- The head of department appoints an evaluation committee consisting of the head of department (chair), the head of studies/deputy head of department for education and two internal and/or external¹¹ professors within the relevant subject area. One or two of the experts may be members of the review group.
- The evaluation committee interviews the assistant professor (minutes to be taken by one of the members)
- On the basis of the interview and the associate professor's submitted material (promotion plan and dossier), the evaluation committee draws up a brief written evaluation of the associate professor.
- The written evaluation and the minutes are sent to the associate professor for comments.

The evaluation is retrospective, but also looks at future prospects, which means that the evaluation committee makes both an evaluation of the criteria that the assistant professor has already met and an assessment of which criteria they should focus on working further on in order to qualify for promotion to professor. Along with the minutes of the meeting, the brief written evaluation provides the basis for the head of department's further

¹¹ 'External' means that the individual in question is not employed at the University.

work/discussions with the assistant professor. The interim evaluation is thus a preliminary assessment of how far the associate professor has come.

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There may be cases where the associate professor's interim evaluation is so positive that, by agreement with the head of department, the associate professor can enter for the final assessment immediately upon the interim evaluation.

Regardless of when the final assessment begins, other expert assessors must be involved in the final assessment than in the interim evaluation.

Special circumstances that may extend the period beyond eight years

- Maternity/paternity leave or adoption leave equivalent to the period of absence
- Prolonged illness

Extension of the period beyond eight years depends on the job structure, which forms the legal basis for an extension.

As stated in the job structure's general remarks, in the event of absence due to maternity/paternity or adoption leave and long-term illness, the maximum limit for the total period of employment will be extended equivalent to the duration of the absence. UCPH interprets the job structure in such a way that employees covered by the promotion programme may extend the programme period beyond eight years if they are absent for any of the above-mentioned reasons. This ensures that employees are not at a disadvantage because of absence due to maternity/paternity leave, etc.

3. C. Final assessment in connection with the transition to a professorship

Criteria for being academically qualified for a professorship

It follows from the job structure that it is a condition for transition to a professorship that the associate professor is assessed to be academically qualified.

The final assessment is based on the criteria for recognising merit of professors at the University of Copenhagen. The requirements for an associate professor at the final assessment fully match the requirements for applicants seeking a professorship via an open call.

Procedure of final assessment:

The timing of the final assessment will be a natural part of the annual meetings between the associate professor and the head of department. The timing of the final assessment is agreed by the head of department and the associate professor, meaning that the head of department's decision to initiate the final assessment is based on dialogue with the associate professor. Under the job structure, the final assessment must take place within the last six months of the eight-year period. Accordingly, the promotion process is initiated no later than 7.5 years into the promotion programme¹².

Management has an important task in relation to the assessment committee. The managerial task is to instruct the assessment committee and make clear both the requirements for the actual assessment and the criteria to be met in order to qualify for promotion from associate professor to professor.

Assessment on the basis of the criteria for merit

- The head of department is not part of the assessment committee in the final assessment.
- An assessment committee is appointed within the framework of the University's guidelines for assessment committees. The assessment committee consists of at least one internal member (chair) and two external professors at an international level.
- The internal member chairs the assessment committee.
- The assessment committee must consider all criteria for recognising merit of professors.
- The chair of the assessment committee (internal member) presents the assessment to the dean.
- Please note that the experts involved in the final assessment and the interim evaluation process may not be the same.

Transition to professorship

It is a prerequisite for transition to employment as professor that the employee is assessed as academically qualified. The dean decides on the transition to professorship on the basis of the assessment, and ensures that

¹² It follows from the Job Structure that assessment can take place only twice within the maximum eight years of the programme. Any second attempt must therefore be within the eight years.

the academic level at the final assessment fully matches the level of appointment of professors by open calls.

If the associate professor fails to request that their qualifications be assessed no later than six months before the promotion programme expires or if they are assessed to be not qualified, the associate professor will continue to be employed in that capacity outside of the promotion programme.

Under the job structure, the University can offer the associate professor an extra attempt within the time frame of the specific promotion programme, allowing for a maximum of two academic assessments.

4. Model for the promotion programme from associate professor to professor without advertisement

Internationally recognisable programme

The purpose of the promotion programme is to support UCPH's efforts to retain and attract the best national and international talents. The best international talents are in high demand and the University wants to use a model that is based on an internationally recognisable programme, which can make it easier to attract international talents. There are many different international models and many ways of making a model internationally recognisable. However, transparent decision-making is a recurring element in several places in connection with final assessments, for example at the University of Cambridge.

Two separate tracks from assistant professor to associate professor and from associate professor to professor

After transition to associate professor, it is not possible for a tenure-track assistant professor to enter the promotion programme directly without applying for transition to the promotion programme on an equal footing with other associate professors.

No transition scheme

The option for all permanently employed associate professors to apply for the promotion programme, with their head of department's approval, means that there is no need to establish a transitional scheme for already employed associate professors.

Number of associate professors on the promotion programme

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UCPH wishes to continue to recruit external talent on open calls, which also includes postings for promotion associate professors, and to ensure clear and attractive career paths for already employed talent through the promotion programme. The deans must consider and ensure a balance of the two, including whether the faculties should set actual targets for the number of professor recruitments via open calls and internal promotion, respectively. The individual faculties and departments may have different needs in terms of the bigger recruitment picture and/or academic focus areas, etc. (number of tenure track assistant professors, associate professors and professors). The balance is monitored by Senior Management, LT, which can adjust this approach on the back of discussions and experience gained.

Monitoring of the promotion programme

Monitoring of the programme is to ensure that the promotion programme lives up to the key prerequisites for the programme.

The Rector appoints a faculty board at UCPH level, consisting of professors advising the Rectorate and the deans (Senior Management Team/LT) on promotion-related strategic issues of an interdisciplinary nature, with a particular focus on ensuring a high academic level across UCPH and to consider gender balance, internationalisation, the level of promotions, whether UCPH is attracting and developing more talents, etc. The Rector appoints members of the faculty board on the basis of recommendations from deans and the Academic Council.

As part of the monitoring process, LT will have annual discussions on the basis of the faculty board's report. The deans may choose to discuss the programme with, for example, the Academic Council or Faculty Management before the annual discussion in LT.

Members of the working group

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- Associate Dean Julie Sommerlund, HUM (until 31 December 2019)
- Associate Dean Mogens Holst Nissen, SUND
- Associate Dean Andreas de Neergaard, SOC.SCI. (until 31 January 2021)
- Head of Department Svend Christensen, Plant and Environmental Sciences
- Head of Department Søren Kyllingsbæk, Psychology
- Joint staff representative for academic staff Thomas Vils Pedersen
- Head of Section Karen Vestergaard Petersen, SCIENCE Faculty Services
- Director Lisbeth Møller, Shared HR (until 31 December 2019)
- Director Thomas Molin, Shared HR (from 1 January 2020)

Also from Shared HR:

- Group Leader Iben Rørbye
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