

Academic Job Titles Review

Briefing Note for Academic Staff

Background

The College is conducting a review of all current academic titles, including honorary and visiting titles, associated progression processes and requirements, to establish whether there is a compelling case to change any or all existing titles and the options available. The full Terms of Reference for the associated Working Group are listed in Appendix A. The membership of the Working Group is given in Appendix B, and that of the associated Work Stream in Appendix C. The members of the latter were nominated by Faculties. The preliminary recommendations of the Working Group were presented to the Academic Strategy Committee in December, with final recommendations due to be presented at the meeting in March 2024 following further consultation. This document contains a summary of recommendations and takes into account feedback from Faculty representatives on the Working Group, the Work Stream, and the Academic Strategy Committee. Following external developments since the first meeting of the Working Group in June 2023, the topic of visiting and honorary academics is being considered by a separate subgroup with the membership given in Appendix D. The associated recommendations are not included in the current document.

Current Titles in the Academic Job Family

- The Academic job family titles currently used in Faculties of Engineering, Medicine (non-Clinical) and Natural Sciences are shown in Figure 1. Titles used in Learning & Teaching and Research job families are included for completeness. These are subject to separate reviews.

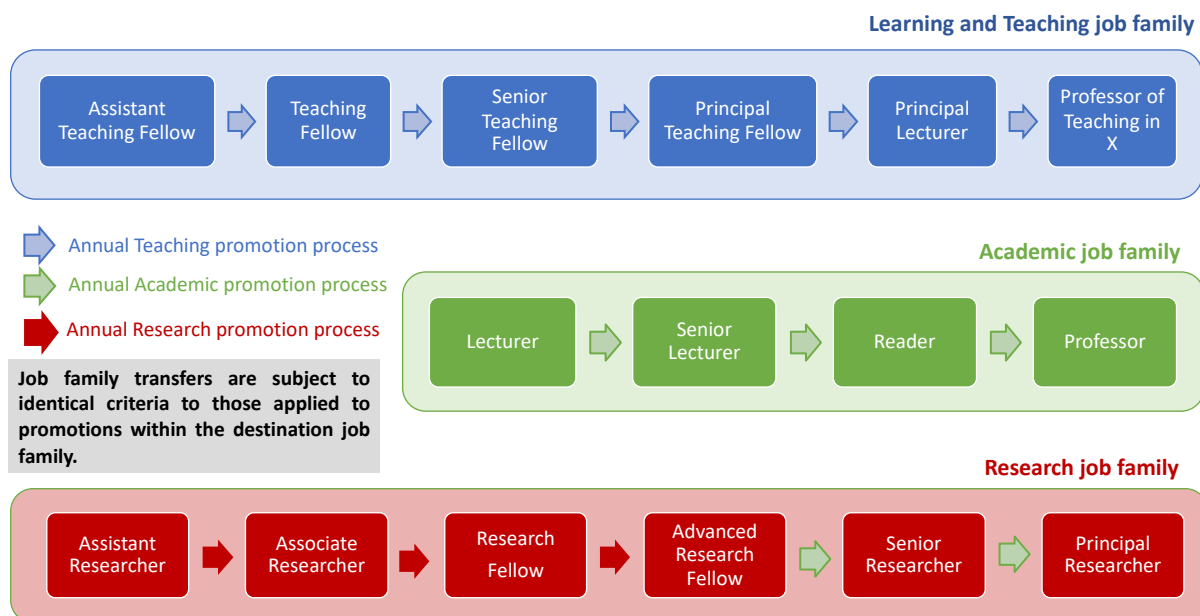


Figure 1. Current Academic, Learning & Teaching and Research job family titles at Imperial College as used in Faculties of Engineering, Medicine and Natural Sciences.

- Progression to Professor normally proceeds in three steps, from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer via Reader to Professor. In exceptional circumstances, double jumps may be considered. The progression steps from Senior Lecturer to Reader and from Reader to Professor are managed at the College level.

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

- The promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer was in the past treated as optional, with staff able to proceed directly to Reader without this being considered a double jump. The time for progression from Lecturer to Reader was correspondingly increased.
- More recently the progression to Reader routinely passes via Senior Lecturer, with the benefit that the time to the first promotion is significantly reduced. The progression to Senior Lecturer is essentially managed at the Faculty level with support from the College.
- Progression for Clinical staff in the Faculty of Medicine and for staff in the ICBS proceeds in two steps as shown in Figure 2. Both progression steps are managed via the College process.
- Clinical Lecturer posts in the Faculty of Medicine are aimed at providing post-doctoral research training, and ideally to facilitate an application for an intermediate research fellowship or clinician scientist application and progressing a clinical academic career.

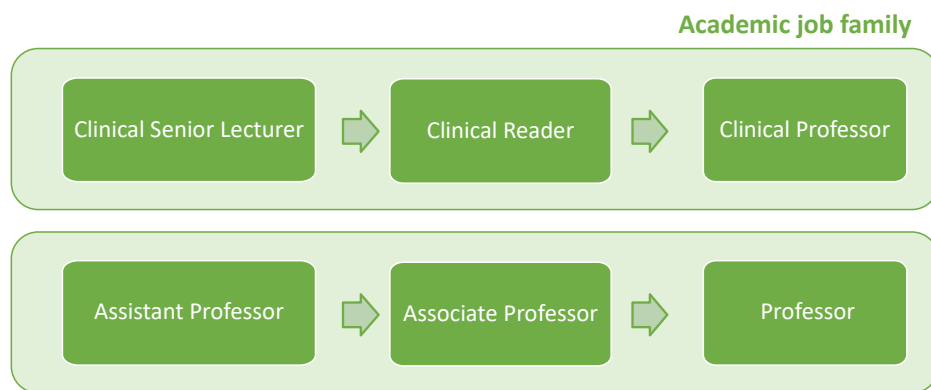


Figure 2. Current Academic job family titles at Imperial College for Clinical Staff in the Faculty of Medicine (top) and the Business School (bottom).

- Progression in the ICBS passes in two steps from Assistant Professor via Associate Professor to Professor. Both progression steps are managed via the College process.
- The most significant difference between the ICBS and other Faculties, in addition to different titles, can be found in sector dependent progression criteria.
- Progression is handled separately from probation in all Faculties.
- Confirmation of appointment in ICBS requires a successful promotion to Associate Professor.



Figure 3. Current Academic job family titles at North American and some other peer institutions.

- The common three-tier system for progression in the Academic job family is shown in Figure 3. The latter is applied, for example, by North American institutions. In some cases, there are internal facing separations, for example, indicating tenured or non-tenured staff.
- The mapping of Clinical Senior Lecturer to Assistant Clinical Professor and Clinical Reader to Associate Clinical Professor to the structure given in Figure 3 appears straightforward.

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

Proposed Titles in the Academic Job Family

- The retention of an internal or external facing four-tier system preserves the rigour of the progression process and enables a comparatively straightforward mapping of titles.
- The subdivision of the Assistant Professor grade is viewed as the most favourable option and permits a direct mapping of Reader to Associate Professor.
- The use of College specific external facing titles, such as Senior Assistant Professor, was considered and rejected as potentially confusing.
- The recommended new structure for progression in the Academic job family and associated titles are given in Figure 4.

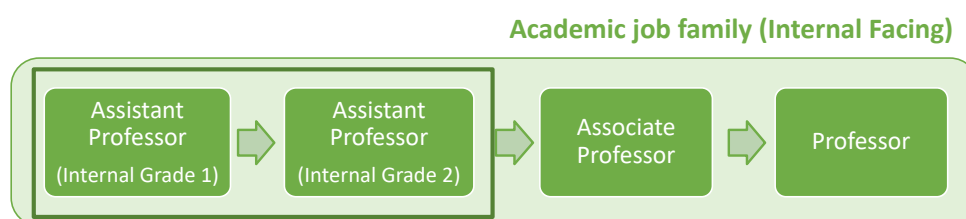


Figure 4. Proposed Academic job family titles.

- The progression to Associate Professor will retain the current criteria for advancement to Reader.
- The progression to Professor will retain the current criteria for advancement to Professor.
- The retention of two internal facing grades at the Assistant Professor level is viewed as important, as it permits an earlier advancement opportunity with benefits to staff that are commensurate with the promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.
- The retention of two internal grades at the Assistant Professor level also provides an important opportunity for enhanced mentoring and consistency in advancement across Faculties.
- The criteria for progression from Assistant Professor (Grade 1) to Assistant Professor (Grade 2) are likely to be similar to those currently applied for promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.
- The progression from Assistant Professor (Grade 1) to Assistant Professor (Grade 2) is expected to be managed at the Faculty level, with support from the College.
- Staff who would not wish to adopt the new titles will be offered the option to retain their current title until promoted.
- It is not proposed to link progression from Assistant Professor (Grade 1) to Assistant Professor (Grade 2) to the end of probation. This is a possible future option for providing a clear advancement structure for early career academic staff¹.

Alternative Revised Academic Titles

- The subdivision of the Associate Professor title has also been considered by introducing the College-specific external facing title of Principal Associate Professor.
- The introduction of the Principal Associate Professor would enable a mapping of Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor.

¹ Thanks are due to Peter Haynes for sharing the draft and final form of the LERU paper “Tenure track and the future of attractive research careers in Europe” prepared by Overlaet and Lutz (2023).

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

- The mapping of Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor is controversial, as current College progression criteria to Senior Lecturer are less rigorous than those applied in North American peer institutions for progression to Associate Professor.
- The mapping of Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor accordingly implies “title inflation” and is not favoured. Furthermore, the use of College specific external facing titles was again rejected as potentially confusing.
- The external facing title of Principal Associate Professor may be replaced by an internal facing grade separation where Senior Lecturers and Readers have the same external facing title of Associate Professor despite the significant differences in progression criteria. This is considered inappropriate.
- To preserve rigour, the criteria for the internal facing progression from Associate Professor (Grade 1; c.f. Senior Lecturer) to Associate Professor (Grade 2; c.f. Reader) would necessarily be similar to those currently applied for the promotion from Senior Lecturer to Reader.
- It considered awkward, and probably unsustainable, for one of the two major College progression steps, Associate Professor (Grade 1; c.f. Senior Lecturer) to Associate Professor (Grade 2; c.f. Reader), to proceed without external facing recognition.

Further Comments on Probation

- Faculties may wish to retain the decoupling of the promotions process from the end of probation.
- The ICBS wishes to retain their current sector norm system of “up or out” at the stage of progression from Assistant to Associate Professor. The latter is handled rigorously through the academic promotions process.
- There are significant differences with respect to how probation is treated between Faculties and, in some cases, within Faculties.
- Consistency and transparency regarding end of probation is desirable for early career academics.
- The probation period for early career academics is likely to vary between Faculties and Departments due to differences in achievements at the time of recruitment.
- The *expected* duration of probation for early career academic staff is unlikely to exceed the current time for progression to Senior Lecturer in most Faculties, e.g., around 4 years, and more likely to be around 3 years.
- The duration of tenure track in EU institutions is usually 4 to 6 years with success expected. The system is hence unlike that of some North American institutions where tenure track positions can be competitive between individuals. The latter approach is not favoured.

R. Peter. Lindstedt

4 January 2024 (revised 17 January 2024)

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

Appendix A

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the group is to, with a genuinely open and consultative approach, investigate all academic job titles at Imperial, including those for visiting academics. Informed by the results of research into practice within relevant Russell Group, other UK and global Universities, the group will:

1. Review all current academic titles, including honorary titles, associated progression processes and requirements, and establish whether there is a compelling case to change any or all existing titles and the options available.
2. Make recommendations to the Academic Strategy Committee on appropriate future academic job titles, progression and probation processes that align with the College's 2023 strategy and ambitions over the next two decades.
3. Review how any proposed changes to academic titles and progression processes would interplay with proposals made for new titles and progression in the Research and Teaching job families and make recommendations to the Academic Strategy Committee.
4. Make recommendations on how any proposed changes should be implemented, whether there are implications for other structures, e.g., pay scales and if further work in this area is required, outside of the scope of this phase of work.

Possible Further Phase

A possible extension of the work of the group, once the above is complete, might be to review current mentoring processes to assess the extent to which they provide for a supportive structure for career development.

Approach

It is the intention that the approach to this work will be collaborative and inclusive of diverse views, giving Imperial's academic community the widest opportunity to contribute, including anonymously within the published timeline of work. Subject Matter Experts will be invited as required to contribute to the review.

Proposed Working Group Membership

Associate Provost Academic Promotions (Chair)

Current College Consuls + former Senior Consuls (Peter Openshaw and Richard Jardine)

Vice Deans (Research) and Vice Deans (Education) from Faculties of Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences and the Business School.

UCU Chair

Academic Progression HR Lead

Communication representative

Support to the Working Group:

Strategic HR Partner (Faculty of Engineering)

Deputy HR Director

HR Administrator

Supplementary Working Group/Workstream

Appropriate Members proposed by Deans to reflect the diverse academic community

UCU representative

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

Appendix B

Working Group Membership

Professor Peter Lindstedt (Chair)	Associate Provost (Academic Promotions) - Office of the Provost
Leila Guerra	Associate Provost (Digital Lifelong Learning), Vice-Dean (Education) - Business School
Professor Jonathan Mestel	Senior Consul - Faculty of Natural Sciences
Professor Alessandro Astolfi	Consul - Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
Professor Ann Muggeridge	Consul - Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
Professor David Evans	Consul - Faculty of Natural Sciences and Cross-College Committees
Professor Miriam Moffatt	Consul (non-Clinical) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Richard Jardine	Proconsul - Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
Professor Martin McCall	Proconsul - Faculty of Natural Sciences and Cross-College Committees
Professor Peter Openshaw	Proconsul (Clinical) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Liz Lightstone	Proconsul (Clinical) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Graham Cooke	Vice Dean (Research) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Julie McCann	Vice-Dean (Research) - Faculty of Engineering
Professor Jason Riley	Vice-Dean (Education) - Faculty of Engineering
Martin Lupton	Vice-Dean (Education) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Paul French (from May - September 2023)	Professor of Physics - Faculty of Natural Sciences
Professor Ramon Vilar (from September 2023 -)	Vice-Dean (Research) - Faculty of Natural Sciences
Mike Tennant	Vice-Dean (Education) - Faculty of Natural Sciences
Professor Robert Zimmerman	Chair in Rock Mechanics - Faculty of Engineering
Elizabeth Nixon	Head of Internal Communications
Daljeet Birdy	Academic Promotions & Job Evaluation Manager - Human Resources
Audrey Fraser	Deputy Director (Strategic Partnering and Reward) - Human Resources
Ireti Webb	Strategic Partner - Human Resources
Ellie Robinson	Reward Co-ordinator - Human Resources

Consultation with Academic Staff // Academic Staff Briefing

Appendix C

Work Stream Membership

Professor Peter Lindstedt	<i>Associate Provost (Academic Promotions)²</i>
Dr Sancho Shimizu	Reader – Faculty of Medicine
Dr Fiona Watt	Clinical Reader – Faculty of Medicine
Dr Laura Barter	Reader – Faculty of Natural Sciences
Dr Robert Kingham	Reader – Faculty of Natural Sciences
Dr Parastoo Hashemi	Reader – Faculty of Engineering
Dr Ronny Pini	Reader – Faculty of Engineering
Dr Rebecca Stewart	Senior Lecturer – Faculty of Engineering
Professor Alexander Michaelides	Professor – Business School
Professor Ailsa Roell	Professor – Business School
Audrey Fraser	Deputy Director (Strategic Partnering and Reward) - Human Resources
Ireti Webb	Strategic Partner - Human Resources
Ellie Robinson	Reward Co-ordinator - Human Resources

Appendix D

Working Group Membership (Honorary and Visiting Titles Subgroup)

Professor Peter Lindstedt (Chair)	Associate Provost (Academic Promotions)
Lynne Cox	Director, Research Office
Leila Guerra	Associate Provost (Digital Lifelong Learning), Vice-Dean (Education) - Business School
Professor Alessandro Astolfi	Consul - Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
Professor Ann Muggerridge	Consul - Faculty of Engineering and the Business School
Professor Martin McCall	Proconsul - Faculty of Natural Sciences and Cross-College Committees
Professor Liz Lightstone	Proconsul (Clinical) - Faculty of Medicine
Professor Jason Riley	Vice-Dean (Education) - Faculty of Engineering
Professor James Sefton	Professor of Economics - Business School
Audrey Fraser (from November 2023)	Deputy Director (Strategic Partnering and Reward) - Human Resources
Ireti Webb (from November 2023)	Strategic Partner - Human Resources

² Present only at start of meetings to provide background and answer questions.