Guidance on considering the impact of the Covid-19 period on the application of promotions criteria.

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the contributions that many members of staff have been able to make during the period of the pandemic. This has been recognised by the People First initiative that suggested that both promotions and performance and review processes should be sensitive to this. Applications for promotion therefore now include the opportunity for an applicant to provide comment on how the Covid pandemic has impacted on their opportunities to meet the required performance standards at the grade they are applying for. Both the evidence collected through the People First initiative and research conducted by the Lab for Academic Culture have shown that the effect of the Covid pandemic has not been uniform, even within a given discipline, as many factors, including, but not restricted to, family circumstances, have created a variety of impacts. For this reason, panels should consider the statements made by applicants on a case-by-case basis but, in doing so, they should apply the following broad principles.

1) Whilst recognising the pandemic may impact on the volume of activity by an individual in one or more of the dimensions, there should be no adjustment on quality.

2) Where an applicant indicates an impact of Covid on their performance against one or more specific dimension, panels should evaluate that impact in determining the outcome taking into account the overall period under review and any particular, disproportionate impact during the Covid period.

3) Research and Scholarship Outputs: work by the Lab for Academic Culture has identified a reduction in the number of research outputs during the period of the pandemic and it is reasonable to assume the same will be true of scholarship outputs. Outputs may have been delayed as a result of disruption to research work, a slow-down in publication processes or an increased focus on teaching activity. For this reason, panels may increase the period of time (up to one year) over which a publication record is considered when evaluating performance against the outputs and scholarship dimensions. Panels should not adjust quality thresholds.

4) Award Generation: the number of research grant applications submitted by the University during the pandemic period dropped in most parts of the University, but not all. Although awards lag behind applications, where a negative impact is suggested, panels should consider how grant capture has been affected during the Covid period and factor this into the calculation of the six-year average by adjusting the income threshold accordingly.

5) For all other criteria, panels should consider the impact on the opportunities of the applicant on a case-by-case basis. In doing so, adjustments may be made for delays or cancellation of activity that may have contributed positively to the case of the individual but quality thresholds should not be adjusted. Panels should also wish to take the performance trajectory of the applicant into account in coming to a final decision.

6) It should be noted that there may be aspects of some dimensions that can be evidenced more strongly due to the pandemic, such as leadership, supervision, etc.
The University will monitor any adjustments and analyse them with respect to grade, gender career track and the different dimensions.

It is recognised that the effects of the pandemic period on individuals is likely to extend well beyond the period of the pandemic itself. For this reason, the guidance above will be updated in future years to reflect this.