Higher Education Academic Promotions - Transition from Teaching Focused to Teaching and Research Academic Employment Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) Recognising and valuing the diverse contribution of academic staff, who collectively drive excellence in teaching, learning and research that is integral to VU's success, this procedure sets out information for prospective applicants in Teaching Focused Academic (TFA) roles to request a transition to Teaching and Research Academic (TRA) focused roles.

(2) This Procedure sets out:

a. VU's structured career transition pathway for TFA staff to pursue their professional teaching, learning and research goals while upholding the excellence of VU's academic community.
b. An annual assessment process that is comprehensive, fair, transparent and supportive.
c. A process which assesses the staff member's capacity to perform the inherent requirements of the TRA role; and meets their VU Develop performance and conduct standards, ensuring academic staff are competent to transition to a TRA role.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to Teaching Focused Academics.

Section 3 - Policy/Regulation

(4) Higher Education Academic Promotions Policy

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Applicant	Ensure applications for transition to TRA reflect: 1. The requirements of the Enterprise Agreement; and, 2. The requirements set out in this Procedure.

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Roles	Responsibilities
Supervisor	1. Provide regular and constructive feedback to academic staff on their performance and career aspirations. 2. Complete the supervisor report, and confirm whether or not the applicant has: a. an approved VU Develop plan. b. an approved research plan consistent with the University's research strategy and the research requirements of a Teaching and Research Academic, and pursuant to clause 46.5(f) of the VU EA. c. meets the performance and conduct standards of their VU Develop plan.
People and Culture	1. Provide guidance and advice relating to the TFA to TRA process. 2. Manage the application process ensuring that it is followed in line with this procedure. 3. Arrange and coordinate the Panel meeting.
Peer Review Panel	Assess applications and determine whether each academic applicant for transition to TRA status has met the required criteria for transition.
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer (SDVC)or Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact (DVCRI)	1. Consider the determinations of the Peer Review Panel and, where satisfied that the processes and criteria have been correctly applied, finalise the outcome, and ensure that the determination is implemented. 2. Any applications that the SDVC considers to have been incorrectly considered, and/or assessed will be referred back to the Peer Review Panel with directions to ensure that the process and/or the criteria to be correctly applied when the Panel reconsiders the application.
Independent Reviewer	1. Review the appeal application and relevant evidence; and 2. Determine whether there is a prima facie case that a breach of process occurred.

Part B - Principles

(5) VU is committed to fostering the professional development of its academic staff, ensuring career progression opportunities that align with VU's strategic goals, quality teaching and research objectives. The TFA to TRA transition pathway is guided by the following principles:

a. VU recognises that all academic roles are equally important, with distinct functions in advancing VU's strategic goals, quality teaching and research objectives, and that these roles may vary over the course of an academic's career.
b. The career transition pathway upholds VU's commitment to equality of opportunity and its underpinning principles: accessibility, equity, diversity, and social justice form the basis of conferring all forms of employment benefits at the University. The Procedures are informed by the Staff Disability and Accessibility Policy, Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy, the Aboriginal Education and Cultural Equity Policy and related or subsequent policies.
c. VU recognises that staff may be impacted by a wide range of circumstances and may request that their application be considered on the basis of Career Interruption (and subsequent guidance). This process will apply the principle of merit, including career interruption, to assess performance and capability against the criteria.
d. Applications must be aligned with the current VU Strategic Plan and Research and Impact Plan (and other associated plans).
e. All staff involved in this process must uphold appropriate workplace behaviours and principles of confidentiality and privacy. Refer to the University's Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy and Privacy Policy for further information.

Part C - Eligibility

(6) To be eligible to lodge an application, TFAs will be required by the time of submission to have successfully completed the following:

a. At least three years of service in an academic position at VU;
b. Any probation period associated with their appointment;
c. An approved VU Develop plan and are meeting the performance and conduct standards of the plan, and,
d. a research plan that is consistent with the University's research strategy and the research requirements of a Teaching and Research Academic, and consistent:
    i. with clause 46.5(f) of the VU EA, and
    ii. which is linked to a VU Develop Plan.

(7) An applicant may apply only at their current academic level, and if successful they will transition at the same level.

(8) An application for Transition is separate to an application for Promotion, and each application will be assessed against different evaluation criteria and determined separately.

(9) An applicant should therefore consult with their supervisor about, and carefully consider, whether it is appropriate to apply for both a TFA to TRA Transition and an Academic Promotion in the same academic calendar year (refer to policy and procedure).

Part D - Application Process Format

(10) Applications must be submitted via the submission portal available from the Teaching Focused Academic Transition Pathway Program SharePoint site. Templates, associated resources and the submission portal can be accessed via the Teaching Focused Academic Transition Pathway Program SharePoint site. Please contact People and Culture if accessibility adjustments are required.

(11) Submitted applications will be final and no further changes will be allowed.

(12) Should an application be non-compliant with the requirements of this Procedure, the application will be returned to the applicant and will not be subject to consideration by the Peer Review Panel.

(13) Applicants must complete an application form which will include the following information:

a. Confirmation from the applicant's supervisor that the applicant has an approved VU Develop plan, and is meeting the expected performance and conduct standards, and have demonstrated a level of performance in their existing role.
b. A research plan aligned with VU's Research and Impact Plan, and any outcomes of the applicants' research plans over the last three years (where applicable), and which addresses the categories of: Research Outputs; External Research Grants and Contracts, VU Research Fellowships; HDR Supervision – commencements and timely completions; and Research engagement and impact activities.
c. Evidence of achievements/outputs/impacts (such as, but not limited to, relevant postgraduate qualification, publication output, performance, and impact) in the constituent criteria of the MSALs relevant to the Academic Level outlined in the VU EA and Academic Performance Expectations Framework which is in development. Evidence of achievements, outputs, and impacts will be submitted in the application form, and where relevant a link to the VU Researcher Profile System.
d. Where relevant, provide information regarding career interruptions, explicitly outlining any claims made for interrupted career on the basis of carer, family responsibilities, illness, or injury within their application. The claim must include the time periods over which the interruption is claimed and any evidence deemed relevant to the interruption.

Consideration of Application

(14) The TFA transition process will operate once per academic calendar year whereby applicants will be able to apply

to transition to TRA role. An assessment of the applicant's capacity to perform the inherent requirements of the TRA role will be undertaken by the Peer Review Panel, assessing staff demonstrated capacity to meet the inherent requirements of TRA role.

(15) The Peer Review Panel must be satisfied that the staff member meets both the eligibility and evaluation criteria to transition to a TRA role.

(16) The evaluation criteria for a TFA transition to TRA role will be aligned to:

a. VU's Research and Impact Plan.
b. The applicable MSALs classification and Academic Performance Expectations.
c. Clause 46.5 (f) of the VU EA.
d. Any VU Research Fellowship held.
e. And evidence that the staff member has the capacity to meet the inherent requirements of the TRA role.

Criteria for successful transition

(17) The panel will undertake an assessment and evaluation of applications for the transition pathway in accordance with the criteria, and in a manner consistent with the Academic Expectations Framework or equivalent. Due regard will be given to equity issues, particularly those matters that affect the University's current target equity groups (women, staff with disabilities, First Nations staff, gender diverse communities and those from diverse cultural and linguistically diverse communities). See Victoria University's Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy.

(18) Transition from TFA to TRA is based on the applicant's demonstrated capacity to perform the inherent requirements of the TRA role at the current academic level in accordance with the applicable MSALs and any applicable Academic Performance Expectations that elaborate on the MSALs. Furthermore, the applicant is also expected to provide evidence consistent with their current academic level for their discipline which addresses each of the four categories:

a. Research Outputs (including creative works/NTROs).
b. External Research Grants and Contracts, VU Research Fellowships.
c. HDR Supervision – commencements and timely completions.
d. Research engagement and impact activities.

Supervisors Report

(19) The Supervisor Report must be submitted on the appropriate template available on the Teaching Focused Academic Transition Pathway Program SharePoint site.

(20) It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain a Supervisor's report from their Executive Dean (or nominee). The applicant should make this request and provide the Executive Dean (or nominee) with a copy of the final application no less than ten (10) working days prior to the closing date for applications.

Part E - Peer Review Panel

(21) The Peer Review Panel is formed in accordance with the VU EA 2025 to assess all applications for TFA transition to TRA roles.

(22) The Panel will comprise of up to 5 panel members from the Level B/C Academic Promotions Panel (excluding external panelist) and will be jointly agreed upon by VU and the NTEU.

(23) Each meeting of the panel is to have an Equity and a People and Culture Observer.

(24) The Chief People Officer (CPO) will also nominate a representative to act as the Executive Officer (EO).

(25) The quorum for the Panel is three members, including the Chair.

(26) Panel constitution conditions will follow clause 57 of the Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure.

First Nations academic

(27) Where an application is made by a First Nations staff member, the Panel will be increased by the inclusion of a First Nations academic as a panelist. This person will be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and may be a staff member of Victoria University or from another university.

(28) A First Nations academic may choose not to have First Nations representation on the Panel.

Panel assessment

(29) Applications are assessed by the Peer Review Panel, based on the evidence provided in the application, and will not take account information that is known to the Panel, but which is not referred to and supported by the application.

(30) Disciplinary differences will be taken into account and, where possible, the Panel will use 'disciplinary norms' when assessing applications.

(31) The Panel will consider claims for interrupted career over the period claimed and give specific consideration to the impact of this interruption on activity, impact and output.

(32) Where a decision to determine transition is tied, further discussion by the Panel will be held until a majority decision is reached or, after a reasonable period of further discussion with no majority decision reached, the Chair of the Panel will have the deciding vote.

Panel to observe procedural fairness

(33) The Panel will make a determination on the applications objectively and based on clear predefined criteria.

(34) The Panel will ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner consistent with the principles of procedural fairness. The Panel should discuss each written application in detail, with reference to the relevant criteria and assess their application under this procedure.

(35) At the conclusion of the Panel's deliberations, the Panel Chair will give an opportunity for Panel members, Equity, and People and Culture observer(s) to provide final comments. These comments will be recorded by the Chair and forwarded to People and Culture as part of the formal periodic Policy and Procedures review process.

Panel and Conflict of interest

(36) Staff involved with this Peer Review Panel who may have a conflict of interest as defined in the University Conflict of Interest Policy, or a biased perspective, whether it be actual, potential or perceived, are required to advise the Chair of the Panel immediately.

(37) A member who has a conflict of interest will not participate in deliberations of the Panel for the particular application.

(38) The University Conflict of Interest Policy should be used as a reference in assessing whether a conflict of interest exists.

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Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

(39) The following procedures should be followed:

a. The Panel must have a standing agenda item calling for declarations of actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
b. If a member of a Panel has an interest such that a reasonable observer, knowing all the facts, could reasonably conclude that the interest could affect the decision or functioning of the Panel, the member must disclose the interest.
c. Notification of an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest should be made to the Chair of the Panel.
d. If a declaration is made, the Panel must consider the relevant circumstances including the seriousness of the conflict, the risk that a conflict exists, the likelihood that decisions may be influenced, and the ability to obtain alternative suitable representation on the Panel.

(40) The response to a declaration may be to:

a. determine that the issue will not affect, or be perceived to affect, the functioning of the Panel, or
b. require the individual to withdraw from the meeting for those proceedings directly affected by the potential conflict, or
c. request that the individual resigns from the Panel.

The meeting will be deemed to still be quorate in such circumstances.

(41) The Panel notes should record that a conflict of interest was disclosed. Normally there will be no requirement to record the details of the conflict.

Guidelines for Panel Observers

(42) The following guidelines apply for the inclusion of Panel Observers at Panel meetings:

a. Observers will have the right to view all relevant documentation supplied to Panel members.
b. Observers will have the right to speak at meetings to comment on proceedings in relation to process and procedures.
c. Where problems, which relate to breaches of equity, fairness, process or procedure, are identified by an observer, these items will be added to the current meeting agenda for discussion and full consideration.
d. In the event of an observer being unable to attend the meeting, every effort will be made to ensure a suitable replacement is found. The non-attendance of an observer will not be cause for a meeting to not proceed.
e. Observers will uphold confidentiality.

Outcome and Reporting

(43) The Panel’s determination in respect of each applicant will be submitted to the:

a. DVCRI if the SDVC is the Chair of the Panel, or,
b. SDVC, if the Chair of the panel is a nominee of the SDVC.

(44) The SDVC or DVCRI will consider the determinations of the Panel in respect of each application and consider if there are any inadequacies or defects in the process used to determine each of the outcomes. The SDVC or DVCR&I has the discretion to request further information from the Panel, and to refer applications back to the Peer Review Panel to ensure that the process is correctly applied by the Panel.

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Advice and Feedback

(45) All applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application.

(46) If successful in their application, a transition date will be outlined.

(47) Applicants who were not recommended for TFA to TRA transition will be made an offer of verbal feedback.

Part F - Appeals

(48) Applicants may appeal on the grounds that the Panel did not follow correct procedure in that it failed to comply with the relevant provisions of this Procedure. The appropriate Appeal form is accessible in the Teaching Focused Academic Transition Pathway Program SharePoint site.

(49) A staff member whose application is unsuccessful may appeal against decisions in writing to the Chief People Officer within 20 working days after receipt of notification of decision via TFAtoTRA@vu.edu.au.

(50) Staff members should seek feedback and further information on the reason(s) for the decision from the Panel Chair (or nominee) prior to lodging an appeal.

(51) Any such appeal must identify the specific clause(s) of the relevant procedure/s it is alleged were not followed. No additional information other than the grounds for appeal may be submitted.

(52) Appeals cannot be based on an applicant's disagreement with the Panel's decision or views regarding the merit of their application.

(53) Upon receiving an appeal, the CPO will nominate an Independent Reviewer to review the appeal application. The CPO will consult with the NTEU on the Independent Reviewer (neither party will act unreasonably).

(54) The Independent Reviewer will review the appeal application and relevant evidence; and determine whether there is a prima facie case that a breach of process occurred. If a prima facie case is established, the application will be referred back to the original Peer Review Panel with:

a. A written response to the findings.
b. The original TFA to TRA application form.
c. The appeal application (including the supporting evidence).

If it is determined that there is no prima facie case, the appellant will be provided with written confirmation of the reasons for the rejection.

(55) A decision on the appeal will normally be made within 20 working days from the CPO receiving the appeal.

(56) Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their appeal application.

(57) The decision of the peer review panel is final, and the appellant will have no further right of appeal against the outcome decision.

Section 5 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(58) HESF: Standards 3 Teaching (specifically 3.2 Staffing); 4 Research and Research Training (specifically 4.1 Research and 4.2 Research Training).

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Section 6 - Definitions

(59) Teaching Focused Academic (TFA)

(60) Teaching and Research Academic (TRA)

(61) Peer Review Panel

(62) VU Develop Plan

(63) Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

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Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Teaching Focused Academic (TFA)" - Academic specialist with a focus on delivering high-quality teaching excellence, teaching scholarship, student engagement, and curriculum development, who shapes and enhances learning experiences across all levels of Tertiary Education study.

"Teaching and Research Academic (TRA)" - Academic specialist with a focus on delivering high quality teaching excellence, teaching scholarship, student engagement, curriculum development, high quality research outputs, external grant capture achievement and research supervisions, contributing to both student learning and the University’s broader Research with Impact objectives.

"Peer Review Panel" - A panel drawn from the Academic Promotions Panel Level B and C that evaluates TFA to TRA applications and provides an initial determination of each application for transition.

"VU Develop Plan" - A structured performance and development plan aligned with academic performance expectations.

"Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)" - A committee constituted under the relevant Enterprise Agreement.

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