

UCU Promotions Pathway Survey

An online survey was sent out to all Sheffield UCU members to ask for their opinions on promotions at The University of Sheffield. The survey was open for 8 days between August 5th and August 12th.

Breakdown of responses:

313 recorded responses

- 210 Academic staff
- 83 Professional Services staff
- 20 Other

Responses from Academic staff

Breakdown of responses:

Faculty:

Faculty of Arts and Humanities	18.6%
Faculty of Engineering	11.2%
Faculty of Medicine Dentistry and Health	13.3%
Faculty of Science	23.9%
Faculty of Social Science	31.9%
Other	1.1%

Contract type:

Mostly research	16.2%
Mostly teaching	18.8%
About even research and teaching	62.3%
Neither	2.6%

Q1: Other than through UCU, have you had any opportunities to give feedback on the new Academic Career Pathway since it has been rolled out to departments (Spring 2019)? (207 responses)

Yes	20.8%
No	62.8%
Don't Know	16.4%

	AH	ENG	MDH	SCI	SOC	Other
Yes	28.6%	14.3%	16%	31.1%	16.7%	0%
No	62.9%	76.2%	68%	53.3%	63.3%	100%
Don't know	8.6%	9.5%	16%	15.6%	20.0%	0%

	About even Research & Teaching	Mostly Research	Mostly Teaching	Neither
Yes	21.8%	6.5%	30.6%	60%
No	60.5%	77.4%	66.7%	20%
Don't know	17.6%	16.1%	2.8%	20%

Q2: Do you think your feedback has been taken into account? (42 responses – only displayed to those who answered Yes in Q1)

Strongly Agree	7.1%
Agree	7.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	26.2%
Disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	16.7%
Don't know	14.3%

	AH	ENG	MDH	SCI	SOC	Other
Strongly Agree	0%	33.3%	0%	7.1%	10%	0%
Agree	10%	0%	25%	7.1%	0%	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	33.3%	0%	21.4%	60%	0%
Disagree	30%	0%	50%	35.7%	20%	0%
Strongly disagree	40%	0%	0%	21.4%	0%	0%
Don't know	20%	33.3%	25%	7.1%	10%	0%

	About even Research & Teaching	Mostly Research	Mostly Teaching	Neither
Strongly Agree	3.8%	0%	9.1%	33.3%
Agree	3.8%	50%	9.1%	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	23.1%	50%	27.3%	33.3%
Disagree	38.5%	0%	18.2%	0%
Strongly disagree	7.7%	0%	36.4%	33.3%
Don't know	23.1%	0%	0%	0%

Q3: Do you think the new ACP is more or less transparent than the previous promotion system? (192 responses)

New system is more transparent	40.1%
Old system was more transparent	7.3%
They are about the same	28.6%
Don't know	24%

	AH	ENG	MDH	SCI	SOC	Other
New system is more transparent	34.3%	42.9%	36%	53.3%	33.3%	0%
Old system was more transparent	17.1%	14.3%	8%	4.4%	1.7%	0%
They are about the same	31.4%	28.6%	12%	26.7%	35%	50%
Don't know	17.1%	14.3%	44%	15.6%	30%	50%

	About even Research & Teaching	Mostly Research	Mostly Teaching	Neither
New system is more transparent	46.2%	29%	33.3%	0%
Old system was more transparent	9.2%	6.5%	2.8%	0%
They are about the same	31.9%	19.4%	27.8%	20%
Don't know	12.6%	45.2%	36.1%	80%

Q4: Do you think the new ACP is more or less fair than the previous promotion system? (192 responses)

New system is fairer	16.1%
Old system was fairer	21.9%
They are about the same	32.8%
Don't know	29.2%

	AH	ENG	MDH	SCI	SOC	Other
New system is fairer	2.9%	9.5%	16%	28.9%	16.7%	0%
Old system was fairer	68.6%	23.8%	12%	13.3%	5.0%	0%
They are about the same	17.1%	38.1%	32%	26.7%	43.3%	50%
Don't know	11.4%	28.6%	40%	31.1%	35%	50%

	About even Research & Teaching	Mostly Research	Mostly Teaching	Neither
New system is fairer	16.0%	6.5%	22.2%	20%
Old system was fairer	22.7%	25.8%	16.7%	20%
They are about the same	38.7%	25.8%	25.0%	0%
Don't know	22.7%	41.9%	36.1%	60%

Q5: Which of these is closest to your view? (189 responses)

I am more likely to be promoted under the new system	13.8%
I was more likely to be promoted under the old system	29.6%
Neither – I am unlikely to be promoted under either system	31.7%
Both – I am likely to be promoted under either system	6.9%
Don't know	18.0%

	AH	ENG	MDH	SCI	SOC	Other
I am more likely to be promoted under the new system	2.9%	19.0%	8.0%	15.9%	16.7%	100%
I was more likely to be promoted under the old system	74.3%	9.5%	12.0%	34.1%	16.7%	0%
Neither – I am unlikely to be promoted under either system	8.6%	52.4%	48.0%	25%	36.7%	0%
Both – I am likely to be promoted under either system	5.7%	4.8%	20%	6.8%	3.3%	0%
Don't know	8.6%	14.3%	12%	18.2%	26.7%	0%

	About even Research & Teaching	Mostly Research	Mostly Teaching	Neither
I am more likely to be promoted under the new system	13.6%	6.5%	20%	20%
I was more likely to be promoted under the old system	35.6%	19.4%	20%	20%
Neither – I am unlikely to be promoted under either system	28%	38.7%	37.1%	40%
Both – I am likely to be promoted under either system	5.9%	12.9%	5.7%	0%
Don't know	16.9%	22.6%	17.1%	20%

Q6: Do you agree with either of the following statements? (185 responses)

I decided not to apply for promotion because of the new ACP	18.4%
I decided to apply for promotion because of the new ACP	5.9%
I don't agree with either of these statements	75.7%

Q7: Do you have any other comments about the new ACP, or promotions more generally? (111 responses)

This was a free text question. Responses were thematically grouped and covered the following key areas:

- The new ACP is broadly thought to improve transparency of the process, but with serious caveats.
- Staff viewed the new ACP criteria as ambiguous, and therefore unlikely to be applied fairly across the organisation
- There was an evident lack of trust in the decision making processes around promotion, and a lack of trust in senior managers to make fair and equitable decisions.
- Staff highlighted a number of potential areas for discrimination which included: fostering an unhealthy work environment that has implications for promotion of disabled colleagues or those on a career break, the lack of adapted promotion criteria for part-time colleagues, and the impact on those with children or childcare responsibilities who cannot work over and above their contracted hours.
- Staff also felt that the “one size fits all” is unlikely or unable to be applied equally across faculties. Most respondents highlighted issues with focussing on Research Income as a promotion criteria – not every field attracts this in the same way, and disciplinary norms have not been taken into account.
- Sheffield is perceived as being behind competitor institutions, leading to many academics choosing to, or hoping to achieve their desired promotion by applying to work elsewhere. This creates a demoralising effect as staff do not feel valued at Sheffield.
- The ACP criteria are too demanding and the process of applying for promotion is long and laborious.
- Removal of ‘Reader’ has not been well received
- Finally, promotion opportunities are not available for all academic staff. Those on post-doctoral research posts, early career researchers, and externally funded staff found that they had no promotion prospects at all.

Responses from Professional Services staff

Breakdown of responses:

Academic Services	45.8%
Corporate Services	25.0%
Finance and Commercial	1.4%
Based within a Faculty	26.4%
Other	1.4%

Q1: Have you applied for a promotion within the last 5 years? (83 responses)

Yes	22.9%
No	74.7%
Don't know	2.4%

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Yes	24.2%	31.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
No	69.7%	68.4%	88.9%	100%	0%
Don't know	6.1%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Q2: What was the outcome of your promotion application? (18 responses, only displayed to those who answered Yes in Q1)

Outcome unknown (application is currently in progress)	0%
Successful on first attempt	50%
Successful on second or later attempt	5.6%
Successful following an appeal	0%
Unsuccessful and an appeal is in progress	0%
Unsuccessful and did not appeal	33.3%
Other	11.1%

'Other' included 'Unsuccessful and considering an appeal' and 'successfully negotiated a new role'.

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Outcome unknown (application is currently in progress)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Successful on first attempt	50%	50%	50%	0%	0%
Successful on second or later attempt	12.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Successful following an appeal	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unsuccessful and an appeal is in progress	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unsuccessful and did not appeal	25%	33.3%	50%	0%	100%
Other	12.5%	16.7%	0%	0%	0%

Q3: Other than through UCU, have you had any opportunities to give feedback on professional services promotions? (79 responses)

Yes	10.1%
No	87.3%
Don't know	2.5%

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Yes	9.1%	0%	16.7%	100%	0%
No	90.9%	100%	72.2%	0%	100%
Don't know	0%	0%	11.1%	0%	0%

Q4: Do you think your feedback has been taken into account? (7 responses, only displayed to those who answered Yes in Q3)

Strongly Agree	0%
Agree	57.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	14.3%
Disagree	28.6%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know	0%

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Agree	66.7%	0%	33.3%	100%	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Disagree	0%	0%	66.7%	0%	0%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Q5: Do you feel that opportunities for promotion within Professional Services are transparent? (72 responses)

Yes	9.7%
No	76.4%
Don't know	13.9%

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Yes	12.1%	10.5%	5.6%	0%	0%
No	72.7%	78.9%	83.3%	0%	100%
Don't know	15.2%	10.5%	11.1%	100%	0%

Q5: Do you feel that opportunities for promotion within Professional Services are fair? (72 responses)

Yes	4.2%
No	69.4%
Don't know	26.4%

	Academic Services	Based within a Faculty	Corporate Services	Finance and Commercial	Other
Yes	6.1%	0%	5.6%	0%	0%
No	60.6%	94.7%	61.1%	0%	100%
Don't know	33.3%	5.3%	33.3%	100%	0%

Q6: Do you have any other comments on promotions within Professional Services? (51 responses)

This was a free text question. Responses were thematically grouped and covered the following key areas:

- There is a lack of any formal promotion process and this has an extremely negative impact on staff motivation and retention.
- PS staff felt that their career trajectories generally involved demotion rather than promotion.
- There is a lack of development opportunities and support for development for PS staff.
- There is also a lack of recognition for development of skills and experience that PS staff have acquired (either through their practice, or through self-motivated development).
- PS staff also highlighted a problem where they are expected to take on additional responsibilities that should be paid at a higher grade, but that are not financially recognised. PS roles are also often downgraded, so people take on more responsibilities for the same pay.
- There is also a lack of trust in decision making processes and senior managers in professional services.
- Opportunities to progress are none-existent and staff feel that the only way to progress is to apply for another job.
- Staff also feel that there is a discrepancy between the ACP and opportunities in professional services – academic staff are able to self-nominate and progress through one career, rather than having to be nominated / change roles constantly.

Responses from other staff

Q1: Other than through UCU, have you had any opportunities to give feedback on promotions in your role or department? (18 responses)

Yes	5.6%
No	83.3%
Don't know	11.1%

Q2: Do you think your feedback has been taken into account (1 response – only shown to those who answered Yes to Q1)

Strongly Agree	0%
Agree	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	100%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know	0%

Q3: Do you feel that opportunities for promotion within your role or department are transparent? (14 responses)

Yes	35.7%
No	50%
Don't know	14.3%

Q4: Do you feel that opportunities for promotion within your role or department are fair? (14 responses)

Yes	7.1%
No	42.9%
Don't know	50%

Q5: Do you have any other comments on promotions within your role or department? (7 responses)

These responses echo themes from Academic and Professional Services staff. These were grouped under similar thematic headings:

- Potential for discrimination
- Lack of trust in decision making processes and senior managers
- Promotion opportunities are not available to all staff.
- “One size fits all” is unlikely or unable to be applied equally