

Reward and Recognition Scheme for Academic-Related and Support Staff: Guidance

1. Introduction

The University's merit scheme for academic-related and support staff has been suspended since 2009. The Personnel Committee has now decided that a revised 'Reward and Recognition Scheme' for these staff groups should be introduced in 2013, with the first assessment of nominations for incremental awards taking place in Hilary term 2014.

Departmental administrators, managers, union representatives, and officers of Personnel Services and the Equality and Diversity Unit have been consulted on the structure and principles of the revised scheme.

The new Reward and Recognition Scheme has two elements:

- an *annual* gathered field review, the 'Awards for Excellence Scheme', at departmental level, awarding incremental payments within a simplified framework (a non-pensionable lump sum to the value of one increment, or a pensionable advancement to the next point on the incremental scale); AND
- a 'Recognition Scheme', under which smaller, more timely awards (£200 before tax in all cases) can be made at departmental level to recognise 'one-off', outstanding contributions *at any time of the year*.

2. Eligibility (for both the Awards for Excellence and Recognition Schemes)

All staff in grades 1-10 with more than six months' service (with the exception of those listed below) are eligible to be nominated for an award. Departments and faculties should give equal consideration to all staff in grades 1-10, regardless of the department's financial position or the available funding for externally-funded researchers¹.

Part-time, fixed-term, and variable hours employees and **those due to leave or retire** should be reviewed on the same basis as all other staff. Awards for part-time staff should be prorated.

Those who have been **absent** for part of the year due to sickness or for family-related reasons should also be reviewed, with due allowance made for the period of absence.

The following are **not** eligible for awards under either scheme:

- those holding posts (such as EC Marie Curie fellowships) for which the funder's terms specify the individual's rate of pay outside the University's salary scales;
- those with less than six months' service with the University at the time of assessment;
- those whose TUPE arrangements preclude inclusion or impose alternative 'merit' arrangements; and,
- those holding clinical consultant contracts who are eligible for NHS merit awards.

Apprentices have pre-determined grade progression and are eligible only for non-recurrent awards through the Awards for Excellence Scheme. They are eligible for Recognition Awards.

¹ Research grant applications should have included within them an element for the potential reward of merit, but this is not always possible. Please discuss grant-specific queries with your HR Business Partner.

In the Awards for Excellence scheme, **staff at the top discretionary point of any grade** are eligible to be considered for the award of a non-pensionable lump sum to the value of one increment to reward exceptional performance only. They are eligible for the Recognition Scheme.

Heads of department should consider whether **departmental administrators (grades 1-10)** should be nominated and, if so, how this will be considered by the departmental panel².

The Awards for Excellence Scheme does not provide for 'team awards', but the work of teams can be rewarded under the Recognition Scheme (see below).

3. Awards for Excellence Scheme

The purpose of the Awards for Excellence Scheme is to recognise staff contributions to the work of the University and to reward exceptional individual contributions. All eligible staff should be reviewed annually in the gathered field exercise at departmental level³. For the sake of parity, transparency and ease of monitoring, there is **no provision for making performance-related incremental payments to staff outside the annual merit exercise⁴**.

The University's pay structure provides all staff in grades 1-10 with automatic incremental progression (up to the scale bar), over and above cost of living rises, to reward and recognise the acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and expertise that comes with experience in a post. The Awards for Excellence Scheme recognises contributions over and above this and rewards employees who:

- **have performed well in all the key areas of their jobs, AND**
- **have consistently demonstrated exceptional performance**, significantly above that which might reasonably have been expected for their grade.

Annexe A provides a range of examples of 'exceptional contributions', by staff group. These criteria are not intended to be absolute but to assist departments in making comparative decisions as to who most deserves an award.

The Awards for Excellence Scheme should not be used to reward the working of long hours. If staff are regularly required to work long hours, the size of their role should be reviewed. For those whose role has grown such that they are required to work 'above' their grade, a regrading application, a temporary acting up allowance or a restructuring of the role should be considered⁵. For support staff only, overtime payments or a responsibility allowance might be appropriate.

Management nomination

Nominations for awards will be made primarily by line managers⁶, who should conduct an initial review of all the staff they manage against the criteria for awards. If they consider that a member of their team has met all of the criteria, they should outline the case and collate any supporting evidence in a nomination form. The review panel will require robust evidence on which to base their decisions. The nomination form must contain examples relating to the University's criteria

² Heads of Department are encouraged to discuss this with their HR Business Partner. In reaching a decision, feedback from the Divisional Secretary and other relevant officers e.g. in finance and personnel, should be considered.

³ Some departments may wish to consider operating a joint scheme to review staff across two or more departments together. If this is of interest to your department, please contact the Reward Team in Personnel Services to discuss it.

⁴ Separate arrangements apply as at present for accelerated incremental progression on the basis of retention.

⁵ HRBPs can advise on reviewing roles and the Reward Team can advise on the appropriateness of regrading.

⁶ At the level of team leader / head of section, to be defined as appropriate by the department.

and the review panel must reach its decision solely on this evidence. Managers should inform their staff if they have been nominated.

Managers should bear in mind that only a small proportion of staff will receive awards (see below). They should avoid creating high expectations by nominating more team members than might reasonably be expected to receive an award.

Self nomination

Individuals who believe they deserve an award should discuss this in the first instance with their manager. If the individual and the manager cannot reach agreement about submitting a nomination, the individual may nominate themselves using a self-nomination form. Self-nomination forms contain a mandatory field for the manager's comments and the individual should allow reasonable time for their manager to comment before the submission deadline.

The individual applicant will be responsible for gathering evidence to support their case. The manager should state whether they believe the case to provide a fair, accurate and complete reflection of the employee's work, responsibility and contribution, giving supporting evidence wherever possible, before submitting it to the review panel.

Sample nomination forms, which can be customised by departments, are provided in annexes B and C.

The timetable for the nominations process will be set locally by the department, but the process must be completed in Hilary term, in time for payments to be made on 1 April 2014.

Review panels

Departments are encouraged to use small decision-making panels (e.g. three members of the management board, to include the Head of Department or their nominee, with at least one member of each sex) to minimise the investment of time among senior staff. It is not expected that the panel will include representatives of every area of the department. Panel members will make decisions on the basis of the evidence in nomination forms and use their discretion on how to assess fairly any 'contested' self-nominations. Administrators will service the panels, provide advice and seek support from HR Business Partners in complex cases. Brief records should be kept of the grounds for decisions about individual cases.

The panel should inform all those who were nominated whether or not they have been given an award. Line managers should also be informed. To promote transparency, departments are asked to publish summary data internally (a template is at Annexe D) and to arrange for team/section leaders to make known locally the names of those who received awards, but only after giving individuals the opportunity to request otherwise.

Appeals

Individuals who are not given an award should discuss any concerns with their line manager in the first instance. If they remain dissatisfied, it may be deemed appropriate for them to receive individual feedback from a member of the departmental panel.

In the unlikely event that individuals' concerns cannot be allayed within their department, there will be provision to appeal decisions either:

- on the grounds of a significant procedural irregularity, or

- where an individual can show reasonable grounds for believing that the department's decision was made because of a protected characteristic or amounted to victimisation.

There will be no provision for reconsideration of the evidence for and against awards to individuals i.e. individuals will not be able to appeal simply because they disagree with the decision reached by the panel.

Appeals should clearly state the grounds for the appeal and any supporting evidence and should be sent to <mailto:reward@admin.ox.ac.uk> by 1 June 2014. No appeals will be accepted after that date. The Reward Manager will assess each appeal to ensure it meets the criteria outlined above and convene a panel consisting of a member of Personnel Services and a member of the relevant divisional office⁷ to consider any appeal that does meet the criteria.

The department will be invited to respond in writing to the appeal and the panel will make its decision on the basis of the written appeal and the department's written response. The decision resulting from this appeal process will be final; there will be no further right of appeal.

Timing

The assessment process for the Awards for Excellence Scheme should take place in Hilary term 2014, considering performance across the previous calendar year i.e. January – December 2013. Payments should be made with effect from 1 April 2014.

Incremental awards

Recurrent awards consist of pensionable advancement to the next point on the incremental scale. In contrast to previous years, staff will **not** receive a lump sum **and** incremental advancement. It is expected that recurrent awards are primarily made to those who are at or above the scale bar for their grade and whose exceptional performance is expected to continue. Recurrent awards cannot be made to those at the top of the discretionary scale for their grade.

Non-recurrent awards take the form of a non-pensionable lump sum to the value of one increment (typically 3% of salary). It is expected that in most cases non-recurrent increments will be awarded to those below the scale bar. Only non-recurrent awards can be made to those at the top of the discretionary scale for their grade.

Incremental awards should be based on the individual's salary scale point at 31 December 2013. Awards for part-time staff should be prorated.

*Awards for Excellence are limited to one increment (c.3% of salary) in **all** cases.*

Monitoring

Departments should record nominations for an Award for Excellence. A facility will be provided in Core to do this, and a Quick Reference Guide (QRG) will follow in due course. Personnel Services and the Equality and Diversity Unit will conduct an equality analysis of the first round of the Scheme to ensure that it does not adversely affect individuals from any protected group.

Communication

In addition to making this guidance available to staff (including those on leave or without access to email), departments should notify staff formally of the local arrangements for the Scheme.

⁷ Analogous arrangements will be made in the event of an appeal from a divisional office or Personnel Services.

4. Recognition Scheme

In order to facilitate timely recognition of one-off contributions or examples of high performance by individuals or teams at any time (e.g. the delivery of an important departmental initiative, or an idea that leads to a saving or service improvement), a Recognition Scheme came into effect on 1 October 2013, recognising performance from that date⁸.

Nominations for the recognition scheme will be made by managers and will consist of a brief case on the form provided (Annexe E) to the head of department, whose decision is final.

The recognition award will be £200 (to ensure that all recipients receive at least £100 after tax) **in all cases**. Since the sum awarded is relatively small, the value should be augmented by meaningful acknowledgement of the individual's contribution, such as a letter of thanks from the head of department.

The departmental administrator should record all recognition awards and review the pattern of payments annually to ensure that there is a proportionate spread by staff group and sex⁹. A report will be provided in Core and a QRG will follow. In the event that a disproportionate spread is identified, the administrator should discuss the issue with their HR Business Partner.

5. Funding the Reward and Recognition Scheme

To promote consistency across and within divisions the Personnel Committee has recommended an annual limit on the number of awards made. Departments are asked to spend **as near as possible to 0.35% of their paybill** (for staff in grades 1-10) on awards under the Reward and Recognition Scheme (i.e. Awards for Excellence and Recognition Awards) during the financial year. This amount should (provided that awards are spread equitably across grades) fund Awards for Excellence for up to 10% of eligible staff and Recognition Awards for a further small number of staff.

If a member of externally funded staff meets the criteria for an award, the department should consider whether the costs are eligible on the grant and whether the grant provides sufficient funds to meet the cost. Otherwise, the department should allocate funds from its own budget.

Payroll notification

Guidance on payroll notification and the use of CoreHR will be available in a new QRG and communicated via the October HRIS User Bulletin. All Awards for Excellence should be paid with effect from 1 April 2014.

Recognition Awards can be made from 1 October, as soon as local arrangements have been finalised and communicated.

6. Further support

Personnel Services will organise drop-in sessions in Michaelmas term for administrators, who are encouraged to attend in order to discuss the mechanics of the schemes in more detail. HR Business Partners are available to discuss individual issues.

The Personnel Services website has been updated. An FAQ will be developed.

⁸ Departments and divisions who have hitherto operated local schemes should use the centrally agreed scheme instead in future.

⁹ Personnel and the EDU will conduct an equality analysis with respect to disability and ethnicity.