**Introduction:**



**Guidelines for Academic Progression and Promotion Boards**

**Assessing Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact**

University College Cork’s academic progression and promotion schemes are designed to recognise and reward excellence in the performance of academic staff, which supports delivery of the University’s vision across all areas of academic endeavour, as well as the specific ambitions of the University’s strategic plan. These schemes promote, encourage and reward staff who demonstrate excellent leadership and innovation in their area of expertise, support and enhance the educational experience of students, while building partnerships locally nationally and internationally. These processes are evidence-based, as assessed by the criteria set out in the relevant scheme, in the context of national and international standards. They assess the quality, impact and influence of an applicant’s work across the category areas of Research and Innovation, Learning and Teaching and Contribution, Academic Citizenship & Civic Engagement.

It is acknowledged that academic career paths do not always follow the trajectory expected or planned due to the impact of personal circumstances. The revised academic progression and promotion schemes, under Pillar 4 UCC2022, provide for the consideration of personal circumstance where requested by an applicant. Following an international benchmarking into best practice in considering personal circumstances in academic progression and promotion contexts, the following guidelines offer a useful reference for applicants and Board members.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to both academic progression and promotion applicants and Board members on the inclusion of a Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 impact Statement. These guidelines acknowledge that academic colleagues experience a range of personal circumstances which may impact the nature and range of academic activity they engage in.

**Scope:**

* Academic progression.
* Academic promotion.

Fractional appointments or working arrangements are not by or in themselves within the scope of these guidelines, as the Progression Policy and academic promotion regulations already provide for a pro-rata consideration of academic activity under a reduced FTE.

**Definition: Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact**

Applicants for academic progression and promotion are provided with an option to include any relevant personal circumstances/ COVID-19 impact in relation to their application for consideration by the Board. The regulations relating to academic promotion and progression provide for statutory leave consideration.

The University acknowledges the contributions of staff made during the Covid-19 pandemic. Candidates may elect to submit details of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the individual’s opportunities during that time. For example, this may include but is not limited to: access to laboratories and other resources, access to primary data, laboratories, libraries, archives and other resources, opportunities to travel abroad to disseminate research, or personal circumstances.

Personal circumstances, as set out for consideration in UCC’s academic progression and promotion schemes, recognises periods of time or significant events which involve prolonged interruption or significant impact on an academic colleague’s capacity to work. This includes but is not limited to; disruptions caused by major illness/ injury, carer responsibilities, disability and personal trauma. This could include current and/or past circumstances of impact.

Examples:

* Family responsibilities (e.g. elder-care, illness of a partner or dependent);
* Temporary or permanent disability\* (*see appendix 1 for detailed definition of ‘disability’);*
* Relevant cultural expectations or circumstances (e.g. cultural rituals or practices);
* Absences due to ill health or injury.
* Traumatic events or circumstances.

*\*Temporary or permanent disability including but not limited to:*

* *Blindness, Deafness or Severe Vision or Hearing Impairment*
* *A Condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting or carrying*
* *A learning or intellectual disability*
* *A psychological or emotional condition*
* *None of the above*
* *Prefer not to say*
* *Other, Including Chronic Illness*

**Disclosure of Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact**

Applicants who choose to submit a one page Personal Circumstance/ COIVD-19 Statement with their application form must identify which of the criteria category areas have been impacted. There is no requirement to describe specific details about sensitive issues e.g. medical condition. Where it is important to share sensitive details of the relevant circumstances to be accurately understood, the applicant should share this information via a private discussion with the relevant Board Chair or the Chair’s Nominee. Applicants will be asked to give consent for the information outlined in their submitted Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement to be shared with the College Level Board members, LPEB members, the Human Resources Department and where applicable, members of the Academic Promotions Appeals Board. This information will be processed and stored in line with the PAMB Policy and UCC’s GDPR guidelines with any personal circumstance supporting documentation submitted as part of the process removed from record at the end of the process i.e. closure of the round post appeals. Please refer to the Data Protection Notice relating to your Progression Across the Merit Bar Application **(APPENDIX 3)** and UCC’s Data Protection information and guidance. [Data Protection | University College Cork (ucc.ie)](https://www.ucc.ie/en/ocla/comp/data/)

It may be helpful to consider the structure of the one page Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement being submitted. A one-page template will be provided to assist in this. The applicant is required to indicate the criteria category area impacted. In the template, space is provided for brief explanation of the personal circumstance/ COVID-19 impact, an outline of the period(s) of the disruption/ circumstance (specific or link approximate dates) and Specific impact(s) on the criteria category area(s) identified by the applicant as being impacted. Further space is provided to submit any relevant information. Whilst not limited to what is set out below, the following information may be useful to consider:

* Outline of the impact this had on research and research achievements, learning and teaching and or contribution & civic engagement, as well as associated productivity;
* A positive acknowledgement of what has been achieved given the opportunities available;
* If appropriate, comment on the overall career trajectory/ history in light of the opportunities available during the timeframe of impact.

The Board reserves the right to verify any information submitted by the candidate. Applicants may be invited to submit relevant supporting documentation in evidence of the personal circumstance they have set out in their Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Statement. Any Personal Circumstance supporting documentation submitted in evidence, as invited by the Board, will be removed from record at the end of the process as per the Progression Across the Merit Bar Data Protection Notice.

**How the information will be used:**

The Personal Circumstances/Covid-19 Impact Statement shall be taken into account in the overall assessment of applications by the College Level Boards and the LPEB, however, the statement shall not be attributed with the Statutory Leave weighting formulae, as set out in the Scheme, or as part of Boards’ assessments.

**Supports Available:**

For many it may be the first time setting out the details of personal circumstance and its impact on their academic activity. UCC is a supportive community with a range of resources (*see Appendix 2)* that may be of assistance.

**Some Frequently asked Questions:**

**My issue is very sensitive, I do not want to disclose it to the Board, what can I do?**

You are not required to provide sensitive details or disclose anything you are not comfortable with disclosing. You can disclose in confidence to the relevant Board Chair or the Chair’s nominee. You will still need to submit the one page Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Statement in which applicants are guided not to disclose any sensitive information.

**What types of personal circumstances are taken into consideration?**

Personal circumstances, as set out for consideration in UCC’s academic progression and promotion schemes, recognises periods of time or significant events which involve prolonged interruption or significant impact on an academic colleague’s capacity to work e.g. illness, injury, elder care responsibilities, etc.

**I am a Head of an applicant for progression or promotion who is known to me to have had an impactful personal circumstance, who can I disclose this to?**

You cannot disclose on behalf of an applicant. The applicant’s privacy needs to be respected.

**How is personal circumstance assessed?**

The Board will take the personal circumstance/ COVID impact in consideration when assessing the application. Applicants are required to identify the specific criteria category area impacted which will be used to guide their consideration.

**Some Examples: *for demonstrative purposes only and do not represent information about actual colleagues.***

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| --- | --- |
| **Example 1:** Frank (him/he) is an academic colleague who has sole caring responsibilities for elderly parents and identifies that he can only present at international conferences during the months of January to March when he has more familial support. Frank has a high citation for a small number of publications in prestigious journals. Frank’s Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement, which identified ‘Research and Innovation’ as the criteria category area impacted, facilitated the Board’s consideration of the application. | **Example 2:** Ramona (her/she) is an academic colleague who describes how a significant illness, which is unknown to her colleagues, has impacted her productivity in the two years leading up to her application. Ramona sets out in her personal impact statement that she maintains a full teaching load but is limited in her involvement in contributions at University and community levels. Ramona’s Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement, which identified ‘Contribution to Academic Citizenship and Engagement’ as the criteria category area impacted, facilitated the Board’s consideration of the application. |
| **Example 3:** Jo (They/them) is an academic colleague who sets out in their application a two year period of statutory leave; the period for which they do not have evidence to present under research or teaching. The board uses the statutory leave calculation as set out in the progression policy/ promotion regulation which enables the Board to quantify the research that would have been expected given Jo’s output in previous years. Jo’s teaching period is set out 3 within the 5 years prior to application. As this is directly provided for in the scheme it is not considered under ‘personal circumstance’ but via the progression/promotion statutory leave form. | **Example 4:** Mohammad (him/he) is an academic colleague who was involved in a car accident which left him with an injury to his right arm. Following surgery, whilst back at work, Mohammad was experiencing a slow recovery which limited his travel and lab based teaching. He was due to go on Sabbatical Research Leave but postponed this by 1 year by which time his arrangement with his hosting institution could not be enabled. Mohammad agreed a reduced teaching load specifically relating to his practical lab sessions for the first semester to facilitate his full recovery. Mohammad was able to provide concrete dates and timelines to the Board around his injury and reduced semester. He identified all three criteria category areas as being impacted, which facilitated the Board’s consideration of the application.  |
| **Example 5:** Vlad (him/he) is an academic colleague who had never delivered lectures online pre-COVID, preferring an interactive classroom based approach. A significant effort needed to be put into configuring his lecture materials into a format that could be platformed online in a way that worked for the material and the student’s learning experience. Having a third of international students on most of his modules, Vald articulated he was dealing with a heightened level of email queries and clarifications from students across different time zones. Vlad felt there was minimal impact on his research as he was at the start of a major research project, therefore the research team was able to adjust the project plan and place the travel arrangements to later in the project. Vlad anticipates this will happen in 2023. On the Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement, Vlad selected ‘Learning and Teachning’ which facilitated the Board’s consideration of Vlad’s application.  | **Example 6:** Tina (her/she) is an academic colleague who describes how she needed to take on carer responsibilities in a very immediate way when COVID-19 hit. She describes her research was at a critical stage and due to both travel restrictions and carer responsibilities she was very limited in furthering progress on her research during that time. Tina also notes that with the protracted timeframe around COVID-19 restrictions she needed to collect a fresh data set from which to work with. She estimates overall she is 1 year behind where she intended on being, if COVID-19 had not occurred. The Board can consider the information set out by Tina in her Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement, where Tina has specifically indicated an impact on the criteria category area of ‘Research and Innovation’. |

**Appendix 1: How is Disability Defined?**

*There are a range of sources which can aid us in defining and understanding the term ‘disability’. Set out below are a number of definitions which are a useful reference in this regard.*

The [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2005/en/act/pub/0014/index.Html) set out the following definition:
“disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

The **Equality Acts (**Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts), which outlaw discrimination on grounds of disability, use a wider definition, and cover past as well as current disability.
"Disability means:
(a) the total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body;
(b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness;
(c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body;
(d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction; or
(e) a condition, disease or illness which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour."

**Appendix 2: Supports Available**

**UCC Resources:**
 Employee Assistance Programme: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/eap/>
 Human Resources Staff Wellbeing Advisor

 <https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/wellbeing>

Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT, UCC): Email chair.ucc@ifut.ie
 Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU, UCC): Emailg.hurley@ucc.ie
 Staff Ombudsman: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/staffombudsman/>
 UCC Researcher Staff Association: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/rsa/>
 UCC Chaplains:[https://www.ucc.ie/en/chaplaincy](http://https/www.ucc.ie/en/chaplaincy)
 UCC LGBT+ Staff Network: email: lgbtnetwork@ucc.ie

[UCC Staff Policy for Duty of Respect and Right to Dignity at Work](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/hr/DRRD-1Dec2020%28final%29.pdf)

**External Resources:**
Age Action Ireland: 01 475 6989 See also: [www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie/)
As I Am (Autism Support): 0818 234 234 See also: [www.asiam.ie](http://www.asiam.ie/)
Cork Lesbian Line 1800 929 539
Elder Abuse Helpline: 1850 24 1850 See Also: [HSE Elder Abuse Resources](https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/elderabuse/)
Gay Information Cork 1800 929 539 See also: [www.gayproject.ie](http://www.gayproject.ie/)
Immigrant Council of Ireland/Anti-Racism Helpline: 01 674 0200                See also: [www.immigrantcouncil.ie](http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/)
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission: 01 858 9601                        See also: [www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie/)
Irish Network Against Racism (INAR): 01 889 7110 See also: [www.inar.ie](http://www.inar.ie/)
Male Advice Line (for men experiencing domestic abuse): 1800 816 588

See also: [www.mensnetwork.ie](http://www.mensnetwork.ie/)
Men's Aid Ireland (for men experiencing domestic abuse): 01 554 3811 See also: [www.mensaid.ie](http://www.mensaid.ie/)
National Domestic Violence Helpline (for women): 1800 341 900 See also: [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie/)
National Sexual Violence Helpline (for men and women): 1800 77 88 88 See also: [www.sexualviolence.ie](http://www.sexualviolence.ie/)
Samaritans: Call 116 123 24 hours a day. See also <https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>
TENI Families Supporting Families: 01 907 3707 See also: [www.teni.ie](http://www.teni.ie/)

**Appendix 3: Progression Data Protection Notice**

# Progression Across the Merit Bar Scheme: Data Protection Notice

At University College Cork, we treat your privacy seriously. Any personal data which you provide to the University will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with Irish and European Data Protection legislation. This notice sets out details of the information that we collect for the Progression Across the Merit Bar Scheme, how we process it and who we share it with. It also explains your rights under data protection law in relation to our processing of your data.

## Who we are

Throughout this Notice, “we”, “us” and “our” refers to University College Cork, Human Resources, Progression College Level Boards and Lecturer Progression and Establishment Board “LPEB”.

## How we collect your personal data

We collect your data from you when you complete an application form for academic Progression Across the Merit Bar. For those who are shortlisted and invited to submit a full application, we will receive data from external reviewers, as nominated by the College Level Board at shortlisting. Such External Reviewers will be contacted to submit a detailed report to LPEB on your application – *as set out in section* 5.8 (External Reviewers: Role, Selection and Reports) of the policy.

Extract 5.8 (External Reviewers: Role, Selection and Reports) of the policy.

A detailed report to the LPEB on the candidate’s application. These reports should detail observations of the External Reviewer on all aspects of the candidate’s submission. The External Reviewers shall be asked to assess in particular the candidate’s research portfolio, publication record and profile, and shall receive an electronic file containing same. The External Reviewers shall also be asked to comment on the impact of the candidate’s achievements as detailed in their portfolios. The five top peer-reviewed publications or research outputs selected and submitted by the candidate shall also be sent to the External Reviewers electronically. Any connections of the nominated External Reviewers to UCC, or to the candidate, must be declared by candidates and/or the External Reviewer. Both External Reviewer Reports shall be considered by the Board as a distinct part of its deliberations.

You have the option of completing a Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement as part of your application. The Guidelines on Personal Circumstance/ COVID-19 Impact Statement will assist you in completing this Statement.

The personal data you provide will be used by us only in accordance with the purposes outlined in this notice.

## The purpose and legal basis for collecting your data

Any personal data you provide to us via your academic Progression Across the Merit Bar application will be processed fairly and lawfully. It will be used for the purposes of the College Level Board and LPEB (for shortlisted candidates only) assessing your application.

The Data Protection Acts allows the processing of data personal and sensitive personal data including data concerning health, on the basis of explicit consent. This is the legal basis the University is relying on to process the personal data you provide for your application.

It is up to you to ensure that you have the explicit consent of any third party, where their data is included by you in your application. Third party data should not be submitted without consent.

You are entitled to withdraw your consent at any time. If you do withdraw your consent, UCC will no longer process your personal data for the purposes as set out above and will take steps to delete all reference to your data and application securely.

## Details of whom we share personal data

The personal data will be shared securely with the College Level Board members, LPEB members, the Human Resources Department and where applicable, members of the Academic Promotions Appeals Board. Membership of these boards may include external members to the University.

## How long we will keep your data

In keeping with the data protection principles we will only store your data for as long as is necessary. A record of your application and outcome will form part of your Employee Record. For the purposes described here we will store your Personal Circumstance/COVID-19 Statement and any supporting documentation you have submitted, in response to the invitation of the Board to submit such supporting documentation, until the end of the round of progression for the call you have applied i.e. to the close of the round when all appeals, if any, have been finalised. This timeframe would normally be within 18-24 months of the call.

## Your rights

You have various rights under data protection law, subject to certain exemptions, in connection with our processing of your personal data, including the right:

* to find out if we use your personal data, access your personal data and receive copies of your personal data;
* to have inaccurate/incomplete information corrected and updated;
* in certain circumstances, to have your details deleted from systems that we use to process your personal data or have the use of your personal data restricted in certain ways;
* to object to certain processing of your data by UCC;
* to exercise your right to data portability where applicable (i.e. obtain a copy of your personal data in a commonly used electronic form;
* where we have relied upon consent as a lawful basis for processing, to withdraw your consent to the processing at any time;
* to not be subject to solely automated decision;
* to request that we stop sending you direct marketing communications.

If you wish to avail of these rights, please write to: The Information Compliance Manager, University College Cork at gdpr@ucc.ie.

## Questions or Complaints

If you have any queries in relation to your Progression Across the Merit Bar application please contact a member of the HR Strategy & OD Team on the dedicated Progression mailbox progression@ucc.ie

If you have any queries or complaints in connection with our processing of your personal data, you can contact UCC’s Information Compliance Manager by email at: gdpr@ucc.ie

You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Commission if you are unhappy with our processing of your personal data. Details of how to lodge a complaint can be found on the Data Protection Commission’s website ([www.dataprotection.ie](http://www.dataprotection.ie)), or by telephoning 1890 252 231.

In submitting this form, you understand and agree that your personal details will be used by UCC for the purposes outlined above.