



Guidance, process and decision workflow for change of career pathway from ASE to ASER

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1. Aim

1.1 The University's Strategic Plan 2019-2025 sets out the goal of growing the number of (ASER/ASR) researchers eligible for submission to the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) to 1,000. To support the research and education mission, the University appoints ASER staff wherever possible and appoints staff who are contracted to deliver education and scholarship (ASE) to support specific teaching needs in the delivery of our teaching programmes, where it is not possible to recruit people who have both the skills required to deliver courses and to satisfy the criteria for submission for REF.

1.2 In those areas where there is a specific need to recruit specialist ASE staff, those staff members play an absolutely vital role in ensuring that our students receive the best possible experience and outcomes, and continually strengthen our global reputation as a centre of excellence in education. There is no institutional expectation that staff on an ASE career pathway will transition to ASER. However, it is noted that some colleagues on ASE career pathway have expressed an interest in moving from an ASE to an ASER career pathway to support their professional development. The University does not currently have a dedicated transition process for a transfer from ASE to an ASER career pathway. Providing clarity in relation to guidance, process and decision making for cases in which a change of career pathway is requested by a member of staff contributes to our institutional commitment to supporting staff to fulfil their potential in contributing to the University's mission.

2. Scope

2.1 This procedure applies to staff on ASE career pathways at grade 9 and above, where they have demonstrated aspiration and potential to be a successful ASER member of staff and where an institutional need has been identified to develop ASE staff into an ASER role. Potential can be demonstrated with reference to, for example, previous research or following line manager discussions about possible research areas and approaches. ASE staff need to have met the ASE Pathway to Permanency requirements before being approved for a career pathway change, but may wish to apply for permanency earlier than the full three years.

2.2 The criteria that an ASER staff must satisfy before a change of career pathway are outlined in Pathway 1 of the [Probation and promotion criteria for academic staff](#).

2.3 This procedure will apply when a career pathway change is requested by the member of staff and the member of staff is either a permanent member of ASE staff or already going through pathway to permanency¹. Transfers will be at the person's existing grade meaning there is no change to salary outside of the usual promotion and annual review procedures. For example, a grade 9 ASE member of staff would not be able to transition to a grade 10 ASER role through this career pathway change process.

2.4 The decision to approve a career pathway change from ASE to ASER will be made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, based on recommendations from the Head of Department (HoD), and endorsement by the relevant Executive Dean and the PVC-Research. **The Process Map** outlines the approvals required to change career pathway from ASE to ASER.

2.5 Support for a transition may not always be possible and in cases where the transition is not supported, the rationale will be communicated to the member of staff making the request. The process for a career pathway change does not include its own appeal process. If an employee seeking to transition from ASE to ASER wanted to raise any issues relating to the process, they could do under the Grievance Policy. Future applications will still be considered if the staff member can demonstrate aspiration, potential and institutional need as outlined in para 2.1.

3. Principles

3.1 The career pathway change process supports the ongoing professional development of aspiring researchers who are continuing to meet all the requirements of an ASE career pathway but also meet or have the potential to meet the criteria for appointment to a permanent ASER career pathway.²

3.2 The decision to support a transition from an ASE to an ASER career pathway will in each case take account of the aspirations of the individual and the institutional benefit of that staff member transitioning to an ASER career pathway, including any potential implications for teaching capacity.

¹ This includes staff that are on fractional contracts.

² 4* work is defined as quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 3* work is defined as quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.

3.3 Performance in areas other than research (education, scholarship and professional practice, and citizenship/leadership) will be reviewed in advance of a career pathway change to ensure that the researcher can work to all the required standards of an ASER career pathway at an equivalent grade to their existing career pathway, and will be able to sustain these standards in the future. The Head of Department is responsible for providing this assurance as part of their recommendation for the career pathway change. This will help to safeguard the individual and the institution.

3.4 Heads of Department (HoD) should consider allocating time within the department's workload allocation model and providing professional development support to aspiring researchers to enable them to prepare for a career pathway change.

4. Procedure

4.1 A career pathway change from ASE to ASER will be considered where:

4.1.1 the individual meets or can evidence the potential to meet all requirements of an ASER career pathway

4.1.2 research outputs and activities are aligned to the University Research Strategy and the department's research plan,

4.1.3 the HoD is satisfied that any impact on education delivery can be appropriately managed and

4.1.4 the HoD is satisfied that the necessary resources will be in place to enable the change of career pathway. If additional resources are required, a request should be made by the HoD through the Spring planning process for consideration and approval by USG.

4.2 The relevant HoD should discuss aspirations to transition to an ASER career pathway with staff during development conversations. This includes sharing the procedure in place to facilitate a change from an ASE to ASER career pathway, discussing the level of performance required to develop the research profile needed to transfer to an ASER career pathway and signposting to appropriate colleagues who can be approached for advice (Director of Research, Faculty Dean Research, Executive Dean).

4.3 If the individual is not able to immediately evidence the requirements of an ASER career pathway at an equivalent grade they will need to prepare a Research Transition Plan. This will set out how they will develop the evidence to demonstrate all requirements of an ASER career pathway, normally including the production of at least two REF-submissible outputs (3*-4*) for transfer at Lecturer grades (Grade 9), after an agreed time period (typically 12-36 months). Where transfer is sought at Senior Lecturer, Reader or Professor grades, a greater number of outputs will be required in line with expectations at the relevant grade.

4.4 The requirement normally to have produced two REF-submissible outputs at Grade 9 aligns with the criteria for recruitment and permanency on externally appointed ASER candidates. Candidates might be appointed on the basis of one or more REF-submissible outputs, and the P2P plan following appointment would normally require the production of at least one further REF-submissible output, alongside other indicators of research excellence, before permanency could be achieved. An internal career pathway change from ASE to ASER, which would be a permanent change, should reflect the external recruitment and permanency expectations, with due awareness of and accommodation for variable disciplinary norms.

4.5 Those seeking to prepare a Research Transition Plan should usually have produced a draft output (or equivalent work-in-progress for a practice-as-research output) which, if published, would be REF-submissible (3* or 4*).

4.6 If there is already sufficient evidence of an individual working to the required standard of an ASER career pathway – normally the production of at least two REF-submissible outputs at Lecturer grade – then the HoD will prepare a Recommendation for a change of career pathway and agree a Research Plan developed by the individual. The HoD must consider the resource implications for the Department when adapting workload prior to a career pathway change, and discuss these with the relevant Executive Dean.

4.7 Should concerns be raised in the course of regular meetings that insufficient progress is being made with the Research Transition Plan, the individual may request, or the HoD or nominated representative may recommend, an end to the process and a return to full ASE responsibilities.

5. The Research Transition Plan

5.1 The Research Transition Plan will directly align with the probation and promotion criteria for an ASER member of staff, the University's Researcher Development Framework and University's Research Strategy.

5.2 The HoD, or appropriate nominee such as a Director of Research, will support the individual to prepare and implement the Research Transition Plan (typically 12-36 months), providing feedback to the individual and reviewing progress at least quarterly and usually more frequently during the first six months. In preparing and implementing the Research Transition Plan individuals are also asked to engage with mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, Faculty Deans Research and any other relevant individuals to ensure that appropriate support is in place and risks are identified and mitigated where possible.

5.3 The finalised Research Transition Plan will be shared with the Executive Dean and PVC-Research who will consider whether the plan is sufficient to support a career pathway transition to ASER at the end of the agreed period and, if satisfied, approve it. The plan should include details of any agreed support for the Transition Period.

5.4 In preparing and delivering the Research Transition Plan individuals should engage with mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, Faculty Deans Research and any other relevant individuals to ensure that appropriate support and risks are identified and mitigated where possible.

5.5 After the Research Transition Plan period, the individual will submit a Progress Report with a commentary to the HoD, Executive Dean and PVC-Research. This will confirm that the Research Transition Plan has been successfully completed, request an extended timeline, or request an end to the process and a return to ASE duties. If additional time is needed this should be proposed by the HoD, endorsed by the Executive Dean and approved by the PVC-Research.

6. The Research Plan

6.1 A Research Plan is also needed to support a career pathway change, to ensure that the person's research trajectory can be assessed alongside their output. The Research Plan will outline current research progress against the ASER criteria for the relevant grade, research objectives, future research outputs and plans to generate external funding for at least the next three years, appropriate to the discipline. Research Plans should also include reference to citations, research visibility and actual or potential knowledge exchange and impact.

6.2 The HoD, or appropriate nominee such as a Director of Research, will support the individual to prepare the Research Plan and provide feedback. In preparing the Research Plan individuals are also asked to engage with mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, Faculty Deans Research and any other relevant individuals to ensure that appropriate support and risks are identified and mitigated where possible.

6.3 The Research Plan will be shared with the Executive Dean and PVC-Research who will consider whether the plan is satisfactory and, if so, to recommend to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor that the career pathway change be approved.

6.4 If the Research Plan is approved, the HoD, or appropriate nominee such as a Director of Research, will support the individual to implement the Research Plan providing feedback to the individual and reviewing progress quarterly as a minimum. In preparing and implementing the Research Plan individuals are also asked to engage with mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, Faculty Deans Research and any other relevant individuals to ensure that appropriate support is in place and risks are identified and mitigated where possible.

7. Decision-making process

7.1 If concerns are raised in the review meetings that an individual is unlikely to deliver the Research Transition Plan or Research Plan and meet all the requirements of an ASER career pathway, then the level of support will be reviewed and a decision to continue, enhance or stop the additional support will be agreed by the DVC following a recommendation from the HOD endorsed by the Executive Dean and PVC-Research.

7.2 For colleagues able to demonstrate potential to meet all requirements for an ASER career pathway following a Transition Plan period (typically 12-36 months), the transition pathway is as follows.

7.2.1 Research Transition Plan prepared setting out how the individual will be able to evidence all the requirements of an ASER career pathway at their existing grade, including the production of an appropriate number of REF-submissible outputs.

7.2.2 Feedback received from appropriate colleagues such as mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads and Faculty Deans Research to inform a Research Transition Plan.

7.2.3 Research Transition Plan sent to HoD and Executive Dean for endorsement and PVC-Research for approval.

7.2.4 Research Transition Plan implemented until the Research Transition Plan review date, with regular reviews for the first six months and quarterly reviews thereafter by the HoD or appropriate nominee.

7.2.5 Progress Report and Research Plan prepared by HoD with a recommendation for a career pathway change agreed by the Executive Dean and PVC-Research.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor considers approval of the transition to an ASER career pathway.

7.3 For colleagues able to evidence all requirements for an ASER career pathway including a 3*-4* research output and an active research profile:

7.3.1 Recommendation prepared by the HoD setting out how the individual has evidenced all requirements of an ASER career pathway and sent to the Executive Dean and PVC-Research for endorsement and to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for approval.

7.3.2 Research Plan outlining future research objectives and intended outputs is recommended by the Executive Dean and the PVC-Research to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for approval.

7.3.3 Deputy Vice-Chancellor considers approval of the transition to an ASER career pathway.

Or

7.3.4 Deputy Vice-Chancellor recommends a Research Transition Plan is put in place for an agreed period (typically 12-24 months).

8. Support for research activity

8.1 Where the member of staff is working through a Research Transition Plan or is ready to move from an ASE to ASER career pathway, the HoD should consider any appropriate adjustments to workload allocation to allow time for research development.

8.2 When considering resource implications, relevant factors include the aspirations of the individual, the staff member's potential as an ASER staff member and their contribution to education and citizenship/leadership. An additional ASER post may increase QR income, increase capacity to attract external research, benefit citation metrics, contribute to the department's research reputation and lead to recruitment of additional PGR students. However, replacing an ASE with an ASER post, or reducing the teaching time for someone on an ASE career pathway will reduce hours for education in the Department's workload allocation model. There may be specific impacts on the Department's capacity to run particular modules or courses. Where a transfer of career pathway would create a gap in teaching capacity, a HoD should explore with the Executive Dean how this will be managed, including the scope for managing within existing resources allocated to the department or whether a request for additional resources could be made in the Spring planning process.

8.3 Mentoring and other academic development support should be arranged by the HoD in consultation with the Director of Research. Other options to facilitate the development of research may include:

- An allocation from the Department Operating Budget to cover agreed research activity, expenditure/conferences/ research assistance, in line with departmental practices.
- Engagement with research related role holders such as mentors, Directors of Research, Unit of Assessment leads, Faculty Deans Research, Executive Deans, PVC-Research and any other relevant individuals
- Attendance at Faculty based events.
- Time to attend relevant research conferences.
- Access to laboratory space/equipment if applicable.
- Co-authoring opportunities with more experienced colleagues.
- Advice on where and when to submit manuscripts for publication.
- Individual or group coaching.

9. Guidance for HoDs

9.1 An ASER career pathway creates a contractual obligation to produce published research outputs that will be submissible to a Unit of Assessment in the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Outputs must meet REF criteria of originality, significance and rigour and be internally assessed as 3* or 4*. The Research Transition Plan will provide additional opportunities for colleagues to develop their research profile to ensure that they meet the requirements of an ASER career pathway.

9.2 There is an expectation that ASER staff will secure external research funding to support projects and they should make a positive contribution to the research culture of their department and the University through participation in research clusters and centres. This should be addressed in Research Plans.

9.3 If the planned research contribution of any individual raises questions in relation to the appropriate home department as a result of changing from an ASE to ASER career pathway, any change of career pathway request must be raised through the annual planning round in Spring by both Departments concerned. Where possible, such considerations should be identified at the point of the decision to implement a Research Transition Plan.

9.4 Change of career pathway would normally take effect from 1st September each year for both immediate and Transition Pathways to enable resource planning for the next academic year.

9.5 It is possible for an ASE member of staff to apply for an externally advertised ASER post as an alternative to using the process outlined in this guidance. In these cases, individuals would go through the normal external appointment process and the normal standards and criteria would apply.

9.6 As career pathway changes are based on the same grade, HoDs are encouraged to discuss with their direct reports whether they aspire to transition from an ASE to ASER career pathway when they are in grades 9 and 10 so that the requirement for the research component of their grade may not be too challenging.