



Mentoring for Academic Promotion

A Guide for Mentors and Mentees

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Introduction

This guide is for both mentees and mentors engaged in the RMIT academic promotion process. It provides an overview of the stages of academic promotion and identifies the support available for mentees and the relevant forms and documents they will need to access to complete a promotion application. More detailed information about academic promotion and downloadable forms can be accessed from the [Academic Promotion webpage](#).

The guide also provides instructional material on mentoring specifically for academic promotion, covering the code of conduct, roles and responsibilities and suggested structures for the first mentoring meeting and ongoing conversations. There are a number of suggested activities for mentors and mentees.

Academic promotion

Under the Academic Promotion Framework all applicants are required to provide evidence under the Engagement domain and, in addition, either Education, Research, or both, depending on their individual role and contribution. If an applicant has a workload allocation for teaching/education duties or research of 30% or over, they are required to address that domain in a promotion application. HDR Supervision must be attributed to the Research Domain, but Program Management or Course Coordination may be attributed to either Education or Engagement. Leadership performance can be addressed under all domains, as relevant for the individual applicant.

Each domain has criteria against which an applicant presents their case and evidence. Applicants are expected to demonstrate a breadth and depth of expertise and will normally address all criteria in each domain they have selected comprehensively. Applicants whose work and/or personal circumstances limit their capacity to address all criteria fully may activate Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) to make a case for promotion against those Education or Research criteria relevant to their individual workload or work circumstances.

The tables in the next section outline the stages in each of the application frameworks, the support provided for the applicant at each stage and the relevant forms and tools.

Action for mentors and mentees

Download the relevant forms and documents from the [Academic Promotion webpage](#) and [familiarise](#) yourself with the policy, processes and Domain expectations and benchmarks. These are reviewed each year, so there will be changes from when you last applied for promotion.

Stages of Academic Promotion

Notes:

- Preparing for academic promotion can take around 18-24 months
- Support from mentors is highlighted in the table below
- The degree of support from mentors will vary per stage and length of preparation time
- Forms can be downloaded from the Academic Promotion webpage

Stage	Support for applicant	Forms/tools/key documents
Career planning	Discussion with Dean/Manager	Educator and Researcher Capability Framework to determine required capability development Performance & Career Plan (or Individual Development Plan in Workday) which reflects academic career goals and incorporates opportunity for development RMIT Leadership Capability Development Framework Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) Guidelines for Academic Promotion
Deciding whether and when to apply for Academic Promotion	Discussion with Dean/Manager Early conversation with mentor, if mentoring partnership established	Academic Promotion webpage Promotion to Levels C, D and E Practice and Evidence Guides: Level C, Level D, Level E May need to review Goal Setting and Individual Development Plan in Workday

Stage	Support for applicant	Forms/tools/key documents
Preparing for Academic Promotion	Advice from colleagues	If you do not have a PhD, equivalent accreditation and standing needs to be sought through your college
	Support from mentor	Practice and Evidence Guides: Level C, Level D, Level E
	Advice from colleagues	RMIT NEXT and College/School Plan
Triggering the formal Academic Promotion process	Consultation with manager/supervisor and Dean	
	Consultation with manager/supervisor and Dean	Promotion to Levels C, D and E module
Continuing the Academic Promotion process	Discussion with and endorsement by manager/supervisor and Dean	<p>Intent to Apply form</p> <p>Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) Guidelines for Academic Promotion</p>
Preparing the application	<p>Informal support from network of colleagues</p> <p>Academic Promotion application development program</p>	<p>Academic Promotion Application Form</p> <p>Sources for application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) Guidelines for Academic Promotion • College/School Plan <p>Goal Setting and Individual Development Plan and recent review</p>

Stage	Support for applicant	Forms/tools/key documents
	Consultation with manager/supervisor and Dean, as required	<p>Education Quantitative Benchmarks Report</p> <p>Research Quantitative Benchmarks Report (under the 'Promotion' tab) Referee reports (if you are applying to Level C)</p> <p>If you are applying for academic promotion in the year following an unsuccessful application, include Promotion Committee feedback</p>
Response from the Dean	Possible support from mentor if there is a rejoinder to the Dean Report (only available if the Dean's Report does not support the application)	<p>Dean of School Report</p> <p>Rejoinder to Dean of School Report, if applicable</p>
Assessment of application by committees		Academic Promotion webpage
Notification of outcome and feedback	<p>Possible support from mentor</p> <p>If applicant is unsuccessful, the opportunity to meet with the Chair of promotion</p>	Promotion Committee feedback

Stage	Support for applicant	Forms/tools/key documents
	<p>committee to discuss the outcome, receive verbal feedback and the committee's written feedback, and discuss their future development</p> <p>For all applicants, meeting with the Dean to discuss the implications of the outcome</p>	
Appeals		See Academic Promotion Procedure - Appeals

Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO)

Principles of ARtO

ARtO is based on the principle that measurement of achievement should be relative to the opportunities available to develop areas of academic expertise and demonstrate such achievements.

ARtO assumes the conditions under which academics work, and the affordances of those conditions, vary considerably according to factors including Goal Setting and Individual Development Plans (i.e. workplans), goals and priorities of an individual's work unit, and personal circumstances.

In taking account of both personal and work circumstances, ARtO calls for the measurement of:

- the *quality* of academic work in the time available rather than the *quantity* of work produced, and
- the *quality* and *impact* of achievements afforded by the particular scope of an individual workload in the context of the promotion domain criteria.

The decision to activate ARtO rests with the individual academic. If ARtO is activated for academic promotion, the applicant's Dean/Executive Dean will be asked if they endorse the ARtO statement in the applicant's ITA form.

Promotion Committees will be asked to assess the application through the lens of the ARtO statement and determine the impact of the applicant's circumstances on the time they have had available to achieve.

Reflection for mentors and mentees

Consider the following examples and discuss how ARtO could apply.

- *Xenia is a Level C academic who has had no teaching load over a four-year period during which she has led a project to design and implement a school-wide system to provide students with timely and relevant feedback on progress. Her previous teaching record was exemplary, and a primary consideration in her promotion to Level C five years ago. How would you apply ARtO to this AP application?*

- *Abbas is applying for promotion to Level E. In 2016 he reduced his time fraction to 0.5 to enable him to take on the role of primary carer for his elderly mother. He has maintained a high standard of performance in teaching and engagement within the university, however his reduced time fraction has limited his capacity to engage directly with external agencies. His research performance has similarly been maintained, with a reduced level of output. How would you apply ARtO to this AP application?*
- *Jess is a Level B academic who has spent the major part of the past five years teaching intensively in Singapore and Shanghai. Jess has maintained a high standard of teaching performance as demonstrated by GTS scores and student progress and graduation rates. However, Jess's capacity to participate or lead in the design and development of teaching and assessment at a whole of program or school level has been constrained, as has their engagement within RMIT – apart from that with their own students. How would you apply ARtO to this AP application?*

See ['Achievement Relative to Opportunity \(ARtO\) Guidelines for Academic Promotion'](#) for further guidance.

The roles of mentee and mentor in academic promotion

The mentee drives the mentoring partnership.

This means they will:

- take responsibility for identifying and achieving their own AP goals
- initiate meetings with their mentor and arrange dates, times and locations
- negotiate meeting agendas with their mentor
- be prepared for meetings and provide the mentor with appropriate documents and forms
- listen, clarify, reflect, and respond to their mentor
- act on decisions arising from mentoring meetings.

The role of the mentor is to provide support and advice to the mentee. Mentoring occurs across a web of connections and networks. Mentees may have a formal mentor through BOOST for Academic Promotion, but they should also be encouraged to consult and seek feedback from their own network of colleagues. They will also engage regularly with their manager/supervisor and Dean.

A mentor's tasks will include:

- reviewing the preparation the mentee has already made
- assisting the mentee to set goals and develop an action plan/timeline in relation to AP
- discussing whether and how ARtO applies to the mentee's application
- Assisting the mentee to clarify their practices/outputs, achievements and the impact of these
- providing advice on collecting evidence to support the mentee's AP claims
- guiding the mentee in and providing constructive feedback on crafting the narrative in the application form, but not proof reading
- sharing their experience in relation to AP, when it is helpful
- facilitating problem solving
- acting as a sounding board, when appropriate
- encouraging the mentee to seek additional professional or collegial support as required
- if appropriate, providing assistance to the mentee in writing a rejoinder to the Dean report and responding to the mentee when they are notified of the AP

application results.

The formal mentoring through BOOST finishes on submission of application, but mentor and mentee may choose to continue the partnership through to notification of results of the AP application.

Action for mentors and mentees

Review the roles at your first meeting and be sure you agree that they are appropriate and do-able.

Code of conduct, rights and responsibilities

Code of conduct

- At all times both mentor and mentee will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, consistent with the RMIT values and Code of Conduct.
- The mentoring relationship is confidential and non-reporting. All information shared during the partnership remains confidential.
- Any records made by the mentor remain private and are stored securely.
- The mentor or mentee will advise the BOOST AP Mentoring administrator or facilitator if a problem arises in the mentoring relationship.
- The mentor declares and avoids conflicts of interest.

Rights and responsibilities

- The parties to the mentoring relationship are equal within and share responsibility for the relationship.
- The mentee and mentor have the right to terminate the mentoring relationship at any time.
- The mentor has no supervisory responsibilities or authority over the mentee, and mentoring is distinct and separate from performance management.
- The developmental needs of the mentee in relation to AP are the focus of the relationship; the mentoring relationship places no obligations on either party beyond the AP developmental purpose.
- Mentoring is not intended for dealing with personal issues or therapy.

Action for mentors and mentees

Review and agree to the code of conduct, rights and responsibilities at your first meeting.

Coaching for writing the narrative

Quotations from academics 2019

It is a difficult document to write for an academic. It is all about me, me, me.

It is not the job of a mentor to teach the mentee how to write.

It's a different writing style and an applicant needs time to develop this.

I may help with polishing, but it's about commenting and discussing.

In recent interviews with academics there were mixed views about the specific role of a mentor in relation to assisting the mentee to write the narrative.

What is recommended is:

- the mentor makes general comments on drafts of the narrative, and suggests ways to improve structure and style
- it is not the role of the mentor to edit or proof read the narrative, although the occasional corrections while reading are appropriate
- the mentee can use online software such as Grammarly for checking spelling, punctuation and grammar
- mentees can use external editors

Characteristics of the narrative for academic promotion

The AP narrative is a well-constructed case that demonstrates and provides evidence of the impact of an academic's achievements against the AP criteria. It is compelling and persuasive. Applicants will be required to provide a narrative for each of the domains they are applying under and expected to explicitly address all criteria in those domains unless they have been excluded through ARtO. The narrative should:

- demonstrate how various components of the academic's career and work come together to create impact
- highlight achievements, contribution and impact and provide or cite evidence to support claims
- weave evidence into the story
- provide a sense of academic career trajectory
- provide context for academic's discipline and its characteristics
- align achievements to RMIT NEXT directions and College/School plan
- be engaging, authentic and evidence based
- be written in the first person
- describe the academic's distinctive contribution to teams and collaborations
- be concise, honest, self-reflective
- avoid embellishments

Applicants should familiarise themselves with the language and scope of the domains they are applying under, as this will assist them to be clear about practice, outputs and evidence.

Activity for the mentee

Read through the [RMIT NEXT](#) directions and highlight the goals and priorities to which you have contributed through your academic practice. Review with your mentor and check alignment with the promotion criterion to determine how they can be addressed in your narrative.

The first meeting

Allow 1 hour for the first meeting, although this may take two meetings depending on how well prepared the mentee is. The mentee will have a copy of this suggested agenda, so they should come to the first meeting prepared.

Cover the following in the first or first two meetings:

- Confirming code of conduct, roles and responsibilities
- Introductions
- Establishing where the mentee is up to in the AP application process
- Identifying mentee needs and goals
- Developing an action plan
- Confirming a meeting schedule
- Setting an agenda for the next meeting

1. Code of conduct, rights, responsibilities and roles

Review the code of conduct, rights and responsibilities and roles of the mentor and mentee. Discuss, clarify and agree to these. If there are any issues or points of disagreement, you should contact the BOOST Academic Promotion (AP) Mentoring administrator or facilitator.

2. Mentor introduction

The mentor can begin by giving a brief and informal overview of their academic career, what the focus of their current work is and their experience of AP. The mentor may also like to discuss why they decided to become a mentor for AP and what they bring to the mentoring partnership. The mentee may have some questions at this stage.

Time commitments and availability will need to be discussed at the first meeting. It can be done here, or when you come to item 6 below.

3. Mentee introduction

The mentee can provide a brief overview of their academic career to date, their broad career goals and career plan and their objectives for promotion. It would be useful for them to provide the mentor with a copy of their CV. The mentor is likely to have some questions to ask at this stage. It may be appropriate to explore the mentee's key achievements.

It may also be useful to discuss whether the mentee is choosing to activate ARtO. Refer to 'Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARtO) Guidelines for Academic Promotion'.

4. Checking where the mentee is up to in the AP process

To assist the mentee establish an action plan and timeframe, the mentor will need to check the following. Some mentees may come to the first meeting with their action plan, but it is still worth going through this list.

- Has the mentee discussed their career plan and AP goals with their Dean/Manager?
- Has their annual work plan taken AP into account?
- Do they meet the eligibility criteria?
- In what year are they seeking AP? To what level?
- Have they started to build their Evidence Portfolio? If so, how much have they done so far?
- If they are seeking AP under the current framework, where are they up in their preparation?
- Is the mentee confident they will have sufficient time to complete the AP application?

5. What does the mentee need?

Once you have discussed where the mentee is up to in the AP process, the focus of your discussion should move to what the mentee identifies as their needs. What do they need to undertake the AP process successfully?

The mentee may have already have documented their needs, in which case the mentor can discuss, clarify and further develop these until the mentee and mentor

reach agreement on what the needs are. The mentor will be able to bring their experience of AP to this conversation.

If the mentee has not documented their needs, then engage in a brainstorming exercise to reach a final list.

6. Developing the AP action plan

It is unlikely that you will develop an AP action plan at the first meeting, but based on the outcomes of the discussions above, the mentee should be able to go away and develop a plan of action. At this first meeting, you may be able to scope a very broad strategy.

7. Confirm decisions, actions and next meeting

- What has been decided?
- What actions will the mentee take? And by when?
- When will you have the next meeting?
- When will the mentee send you an agenda for the next meeting, and any supporting documents?

Structuring the mentoring conversation

It is important that mentoring sessions are structured conversations. The mentee will set the agenda for each meeting and this can be confirmed as your first agenda item.

Broadly, a mentoring meeting is in three parts:

1. Introductory checking in and confirming the agenda
2. Discussion of agenda items
3. Closing the meeting by confirming any decisions made and actions to be taken, and setting the date and time of the next meeting

Even though the mentee is responsible for driving the mentoring process and should come to meetings prepared, it is useful for mentors to have a structure to guide each session.

The structure and suggested questions outlined below draw on two models of mentoring or coaching:

The Grow model: <https://www.performanceconsultants.com/grow-model>

Mentors may like to review these questions before each meeting and choose their focus.

Goal

- What do you want to cover in this session?
- Does the agenda we set at the end of our last meeting still apply?
- What outcomes do you want?

Reality

Referring to the actions we set at the last meeting...

- What have you been able to do?
 - Talk me through this
 - Show me...
 - Explain...
 - What's good about this is...
 - You might like to think about...
 - I would suggest...
- What have you been unable to do?

- What has got in the way?
 - What do you need to get it done?
- How do you feel about it all at the moment?
 - That's good, so
 - That's understandable, so...
 - What would help?
- Where are you up to in your overall application plan?

You may also want to add some **Reflective questions**

- What have you learned?
- What have been your key/new insights?
- What is the significance or meaning of ... in relation to your application or career planning?
- How has your experience of ... or the ... action changed your thinking about...?

Options

- Where do we go to from here?
- What options do you have?
- What will you do differently now?
- What might work?
- What is critical?
- What can be put aside for the time being?
- What's your gut feeling about ...?
- What might get in the way?
- How would you address this?

Wrap up

- Action plan. What are you going to do by when?
- What support do you need?
- Where will the support come from? How will you access it?
- When do we meet again? And what will we focus on?

Giving feedback (for the mentor)

Constructive feedback

Giving constructive feedback is an essential part of mentoring. You use constructive feedback in academic promotion mentoring to provide corrective guidance or suggest alternative views or strategies.

The feedback is constructive because it not only points out what needs to be improved or changed, and why, but also provides concrete strategies to make changes, or facilitates a conversation in which the mentee identifies for themselves what changes need to be made.

Suggested strategy for providing feedback:

- identify exactly what it is you have read or observed that concerns you
- explain why it is a concern for you
- ask the mentee to explain or clarify the issue
- suggest alternatives or improvements or strategies, or brainstorm these with the mentee
- summarise the new approach or solution
- discuss what implications this has for other parts of the AP application
- identify any actions to be taken

Positive feedback

You will also provide positive feedback and even though “well done” or “excellent work” or “terrific” may be encouraging for the mentee, positive feedback is best when you can specify exactly what it is that is well done, excellent or terrific.

Receiving and responding to feedback (mentee)

A critical part of the mentor's role is to provide feedback, both positive and constructive.

Constructive feedback is used in academic promotion mentoring to provide corrective guidance or suggest alternative views or strategies.

The feedback is constructive because it not only points out what needs to be improved or changed, and why, but also provides concrete strategies to make changes, or facilitates a conversation so that you can identify what changes need to be made.

If your mentor provides you with feedback make sure that you:

- understand exactly what the problem is, and why it is a problem
- ensure you have the opportunity to explain what you were trying to do and what might have led to the problem, but avoid being defensive
- listen carefully to any answers or suggested improvements and clarify these if necessary
- take the opportunity to discuss with your mentor what this may mean for other parts of your AP application
- write down any further actions that you need to take

If you receive positive feedback from your mentor, you may want them to clarify exactly what it was that was good so you can apply this in other parts of the application process or form.