Academic Promotion Program

Proposal:

To enhance the academic employee experience, and increase engagement, equitability, transparency, rates of retention and talent acquisition, it is proposed the respective promotion process be redesigned utilising the principles of gamification to design a computerised support program. Gamification is the strategic attempt to enhance the design of a process through the application of elements typically associated with game playing, such as, introducing competition or point scoring; with the objective of moving toward achieving a goal. Research demonstrates gamification leads to positive outcomes in employment and education settings, such as, increased engagement, motivation, creativity, innovation, and problem solving (Keengwe, & Byamukama, 2019).

The 'Academic Promotion process' would effectively be removed and replaced with the 'Academic Promotion Program'. To achieve this a computerised program would be designed and implemented to guide and support academics from the initial 'establish objectives' stage, through to the final 'promotion achievement' stage.

Process:

Note: the program would calculate and apply Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) factor adjustments to objectives, for example, for carer responsibilities or leave (allowing for promotion despite part-time hours or breaks in employment for carers leave, based on calculated adjustment).

1. **Objectives established based on agreed categories**- The academic meets with a discipline specific 'Promotion Planner' from their Faculty and determines the objectives that will allow them to progress to the next academic level, relevant to their role and discipline for each of the categories.
2. **Input the agreed objectives-** The agreed objectives for each of the categories is input into the computerised support program and the academic begins moving toward achieving the objectives.

3. **Support and mentoring-** The academic works with different focussed mentors/ supports to achieve the objectives in each of the different categories, for example, research or teaching specific mentors.

4. **Record of evidence-** The academic uploads evidence of accomplishment toward achieving the objectives as they progress through the program. In addition to the integration of existing programs, such as, the Research Productivity Index and the Standards of Teaching and Learning (SOTL).

5. **Review progress against agreed objectives-** The academic discusses their progress with mentors and/ or the 'Promotion Planner' and receives ongoing support and guidance towards achievement. Objectives can be revised if necessary, in consultation with Faculty 'Promotion Planner'.

6. **Promotion achievement-** The academic achieves the objectives and is promoted to the next level once the objectives in all the categories are achieved. The outcomes are reviewed and assessed, and the promotion is confirmed (all academic promotions are still published and celebrated once a year, but promotions are effective from the date the are successfully achieved).

Expected benefits:

The Academic Promotion Program would be a sector leading innovation with the potential not only to improve the experience and equitability of the process; but to also support our University to achieve world leading outcomes and our 2030 Strategy.

The Program would aim to set our University apart as sector leaders in supporting our people, and improve our performance through increased focus, and academic engagement and motivation. Research shows an engaged and motivated workforce is directly linked to improved organisational performance (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008; Bassi, & McMurrer, 2007).

Additionally, the Program would support the SAGE Athena Swan framework, which guides institutions to 'identify and remove the structural, systematic, and cultural barriers that impede the attraction, retention and progression of staff' (Science in Australia Gender Equity, 2021).

Recommendations:

- Computerise the current process

    Key benefits of computerising the program include:
    - The utilisation of gamification to enhance the design of the process, and increase employee engagement, motivation, creativity, innovation, and problem solving.
    - The ability to calculate and apply adjustments for Equality Employment Opportunity factors.
    - The collection of data to gain valuable insights and analysis, which would highlight trends and problems early on so that they could be course corrected.
    - Reduction the administrative burden for everyone. The current process is administratively heavy, not only for applicants, but also for the leaders and others involved. This process could be more efficient, and the time saved could be better focused on achieving the outcomes rather than focusing on the 'process'.
    - Increased efficiency through the collation of a catalogue of objectives, which could be personalised for individual employees.
    - Integration of existing programs, such as, the Research Productivity Index and the Standards of Teaching and Learning (SOTL).
- Adapt a version of the program for the professional sector to increase support and create a formalised structure for professional promotion.
- Promotion objectives are determined up front, for both academics and professionals, and input into the computerised program to enhance our organisational performance through planned and strategically focused attention. This would also address feedback from academics, which included feeling in the 'dark' about exactly how the applications are assessed, what parts of the application might be judged most important and therefore where to pay particular attention.
- Use focussed mentors and supports to focus on achieving the different objectives in each of the different categories, for example, research or teaching specific mentors. Our findings showed the current mentorship is inconsistent across the process. This program would assist in the identification of a focussed mentor suitable to provide specific support to the candidate for each aspect of promotion.
- Introduce focused formal mentoring as part of the professional adaption of the program. Professionals who identify they want to progress into a leadership/ higher level/ specialist role would be formally paired with a mentor within their area. This benefits the mentee through developing their skills, supports our leaders to develop their coaching and supporting skills; and helps to develop and nurture our University culture. Individual areas coordinate the mentoring themselves once the formal

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process and expectation is created, which empowers individual areas and makes it more achievable.

Reference

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