

# Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)

## Introduction of new promotion pathways and evaluation systems

Building on the significant improvements in the research performance of Malaysian universities, the national government has turned its attention to their performance in teaching. They have called for a number of far-reaching changes, including a diversification of university career pathways, such that Malaysian academics can both build competencies and increase impact in areas of particular interest. Four domains have been identified for such career specialism: teaching; research; professional practice; and academic leadership.

UTM is a research-intensive university specialising in science, engineering and technology. Responding to government calls for change in teaching and learning, UTM has embarked on a radical programme of reform to its career pathways and academic reward systems. Prior to this change, UTM supported only one academic career pathway, where advancement was driven by research performance. The new UTM career recognition system will comprise three<sup>i</sup> major career pathways:

- » **The teaching track:** appointees to this track will be expected to dedicate 55% of their time to teaching-related activities, including research, training and capacity-building in education. A quarter of their time will be devoted to discipline-specific research. The university has set a target that appointees to this track will comprise 30% of its academic population over the coming five years.
- » **The research track:** appointees to this track will be expected to dedicate 55% of their time to discipline-specific research and 25% of their time to teaching-related activities. The university has set a target that appointees to this track will comprise 50% of its academic population.
- » **The practitioner track:** the university aims to attract experts and innovators from industry to this pathway and has set a target that appointees will comprise 15% of the academic population.

In early 2019, all UTM academics will be asked to choose which of the three major career pathways they wish to follow. The university used the Career Framework for University Teaching to design the 'teaching' component of each pathway, as illustrated in the Figure. For example, on the teaching track, the Associate Professor equates to level 2 of the Framework and the Full Professor equates to level 3 of the Framework, at which point the candidate may decide to focus on educational scholarship and/or educational leadership. Level 4 of the Framework - the 'national and global leader in teaching and learning' - is reserved for those at UTM's highest grade of professorship on the teaching track. Progression on the teaching track is driven by the candidate's quality and sphere of impact, with a predominant focus on the students they teach and tutor at lower grades and a broadening of the focus at more senior grades to include the university's educational environment and/or the wider higher education and pedagogical research communities. The Framework is also used to define the threshold achievement in teaching which all UTM academics must attain, regardless of their chosen career pathway. At grades up to Associate Professor, all UTM academics must meet the requirements for level 1 of the Framework (the 'effective teacher'), and at all grades from Full Professor, all academics must meet the requirements for level 2 of the Framework (the 'skilled and collegial teacher'), as illustrated in the Figure.

In conjunction with the new career pathways, the university has also developed an online tool to support the assessment of academics' teaching achievements, called the 'Teaching Excellence System' (TES). The TES will be used to conduct an annual evaluation of the teaching achievements of all UTM academics against nine criteria, which include a teaching portfolio, a course review report and student feedback questionnaires. Only academics who are identified as 'sufficient' in all nine criteria (scoring two or more out of a maximum of four) will be able to apply for promotion. The TES was launched in March 2018 in preparation for the roll-out of the new UTM career tracks in early 2019.

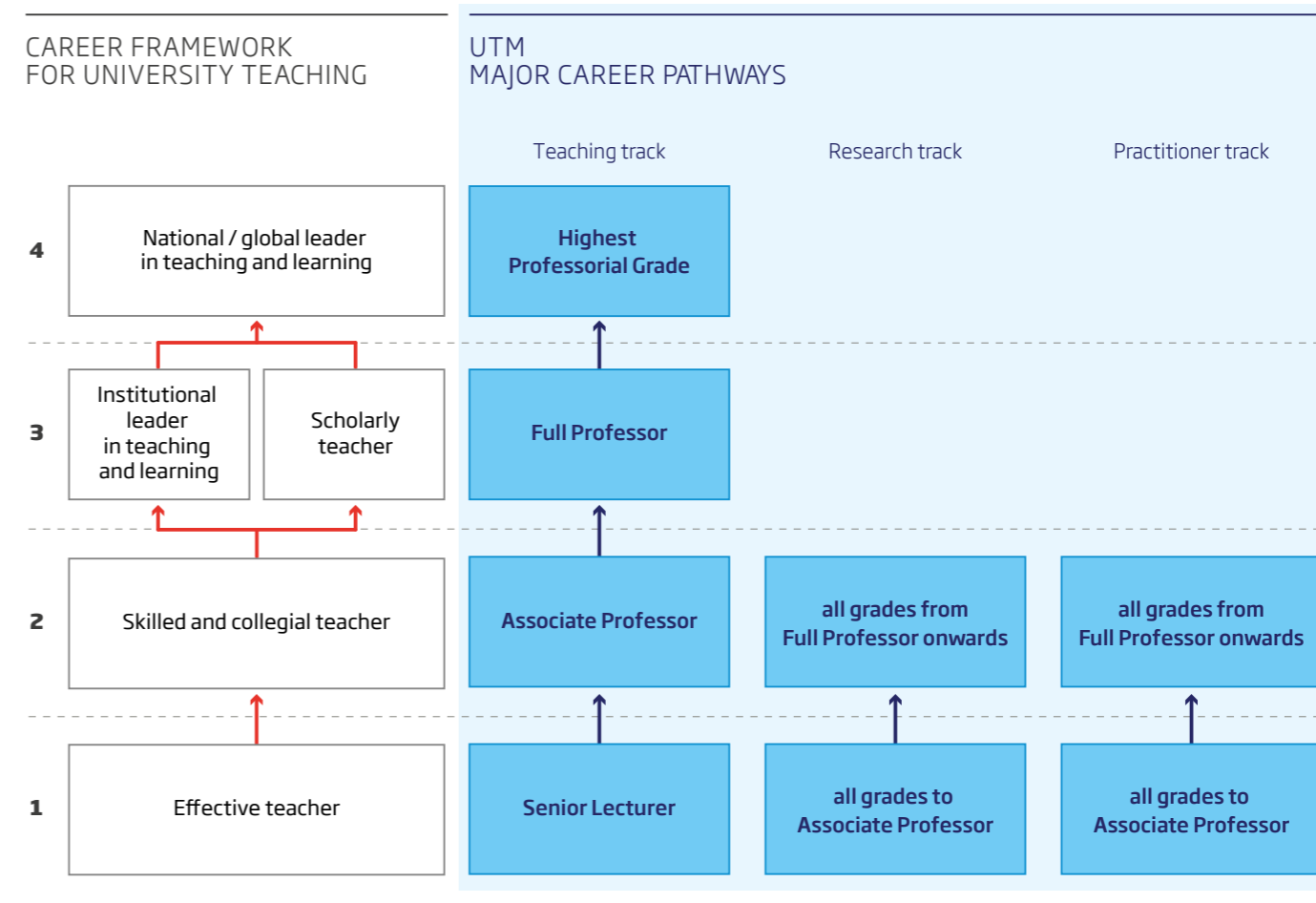


Figure: The relationship between the levels of the Career Framework for University Teaching and the teaching and learning components of UTM's three major career pathways: the teaching track, the research track and the practitioner track

<sup>i</sup> The university will also support a fourth pathway - the leadership track - which will be offered on an invite-only basis to a small number (less than 5% in total) of academics that demonstrate strong leadership potential.