

Policy on Election to Emeritus Rank

March 2025

Policy summary

Any academic who retires as a Professor or an Associate Professor, after at least ten years' service at the University may be elected by Senate to emeritus rank, which is a life-long status. Academic officers at executive level are also eligible for election to emeritus rank.

Exceptions may be made, for example when a senior academic is recruited from another university after the age of 55. With all exceptions, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) is the judge as to whether a given case warrants being brought to Senate for election.

In addition to their rights and privileges as retirees, emeritus staff have additional rights and roles, and may also apply for access to University facilities as may be necessary.

Election to emeritus status is preceded by a nomination by an HoD or five peers or the Dean, and supported by the DAC/FMC or the Dean of the relevant Faculty, or the SEC in the case of retiring academic officers.

Introduction

'Emeritus' is a title awarded, as a mark of distinguished service, to a small number of qualifying and meritorious staff on retirement.

'Emeritus' denotes a perpetual status and indicates a person of outstanding merit. Typically, emeritus staff remain active in the life of the University through teaching, lecturing, mentoring and advising university staff. Hence, every nomination for emeritus status should be *decided solely on its merits having regard to the eligibility criteria specified below*.

Applicable to

Academic staff of professorial and associate professorial rank, principal and chief research officers, and executive academic officers with at least 10 years of service, upon retirement. Exceptions may be proposed by the SEC for election by Senate.

Not applicable to

- Academic staff before retirement.
- Academic staff of ranks below associate professor.
- Contracted research staff, post-retirement, with the exception of principal and chief research officers.
- PASS staff other than the Registrar and Executive Director: University Libraries.

Policy details

1. Eligibility for election

- 1.1 Any person who retires after at least ten years' service at the University, and retires from the University as a Professor or an Associate Professor or equivalent position, (including chief and principal research officers) may be elected by Senate, on the nomination of the Dean of the relevant faculty, to be an Emeritus Professor or an Emeritus Associate Professor as the case may be, and shall on election enjoy the rights and privileges of emeritus rank.

- 1.2 A nominee for academic emeritus status must be of professorial or associate professorial rank, and will have made a significant contribution to UCT through long service in administration, teaching, research or social responsiveness.
- 1.3 No person may be eligible for nomination as emeritus Professor or Associate Professor -
 - 1.3.1 while they are the subject of a formal investigation or proceedings pertaining to any wrongdoing that constitutes a dismissible offence recognised under UCT policies until the disciplinary process is concluded and they have been cleared of any wrongdoing by either UCT or external professional and other competent bodies,
 - 1.3.2 if a member of staff retires before a disciplinary process referred to above is concluded or following a complaint alleging a serious disciplinary offence about which there is *prima facie* evidence; or
 - 1.3.3 if they have been found guilty of any wrongdoing that constitutes a dismissible offence recognised under UCT policies following a fair process conducted by either UCT or external professional and other competent bodies.
- 1.4 The Dean, or line manager in the case of non-academic staff, may not nominate a member of staff who does not meet the eligibility requirements specified in the preceding clauses , provided that
 - 1.4.1 the Dean or line manager gives an opportunity to the affected member of staff to make a written submission before the decision not to nominate is made; and
 - 1.4.2 the Dean or line manager gives reasons in writing to the affected member of staff for the decision not to nominate.
- 1.5 Objections to nominations shall be referred to the SEC for further consideration.
- 1.6 If a Dean or line manager does not nominate a retiring academic member of staff for emeritus status on any of the grounds specified under the preceding clauses, the aggrieved member of staff may appeal to the SEC. The Dean or line manager in question will provide a response to the appeal. The SEC shall serve as the arbiter of facts and the applicable rules on behalf of Senate.
- 1.7 If the SEC does not uphold the appeal, it may inform Senate of its decision if the aggrieved person so insists and waives the right to confidentiality pertaining to any privileged and legally protected information affecting them.
- 1.8 Election to emeritus status takes place at plenary meetings of Senate by way of consensus unless there is an objection which is seconded. If any of the objections relates to the eligibility requirements specified above, Senate may refer them to SEC for proper adjudication on behalf of Senate before a decision to vote is taken. A candidate who secures a majority of the validly cast votes is considered elected.

2. Exceptions

2.1 Retirees with less than 10 years' service

The most frequent exception occurs where a senior academic is recruited from another university after the age of 55, and would ordinarily retire from UCT after a lifetime's academic career but with less than ten years' service at UCT. When dealing with such cases:

- (i) The SEC is the judge as to whether a given case is exceptional and warrants being brought to Senate; if SEC does, and it supports the nomination, SEC will submit the name to Senate for election; if SEC does not there will be no valid nomination and the candidate will not be eligible.
- (ii) As a general rule the retiree should be retiring at, or close to normal retirement age, i.e. a person retiring at the end of the year in which he or she turns 65 or close to this date would be eligible, as would a person retiring for health reasons. A person taking 'early retirement' - before age 60 - would not ordinarily be eligible.
- (iii) A person who is appointed from outside UCT to a chair or to an associate professorship at UCT after the age of 55 will ordinarily be eligible for nomination as an exception to the ten-years' rule.
- (iv) The nomination of any retiring academic member of staff who has not served at UCT for the required ten years must be submitted to the SEC, setting out why the case is exceptional. Where the SEC accepts that the case is exceptional, and supports the nomination, it shall put the nominee's name to Senate for election to emeritus rank.
- (v) A case would be deemed exceptional where the motivation demonstrates significant evidence of esteem that accrued in the nominee's last decade of work, regardless of institution. Examples include:
 - Recognition beyond their organisation, typically as international recognition, for their broad contribution to a discipline or area of specialisation.
 - A specific academic intervention or initiative undertaken and the impact thereof.
 - Tangible contributions to the academic profession, such as accredited publications; translational research; curriculum development; training of postgraduate students; serving on institutional committees; contributing to institutional policy development.
 - Serving on national or international bodies and participating in communities of practice.
 - Mentoring early career academics
 - Tangible contribution towards equity and social justice, demonstrated through a track record in social responsiveness as an academic
 - Intellectual leadership of a research unit, centre or institute.

- 2.2** It is open to the SEC, on the recommendation of a Dean or the Vice-Chancellor, to propose election to emeritus rank in other deserving and exceptional cases; i.e., where the rules do not contemplate an individual's circumstances.

3. Promotions effective after retirement and emeritus rank

A person due to retire may be promoted to the rank of Professor or Associate Professor, with effect on the day after retirement, and this new rank will be that on which emeritus status is based.

4. Guidelines for granting emeritus status

4.1 To retiring academic staff

Academic staff to be considered for emeritus status include: professors, associate professors, principal research officers (research achievement equivalent to professor rank) and chief research officers (research achievement equivalent to associate professor rank).

4.2 To retiring academic officers

4.2.1. Academic Officers include the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Director of University Libraries or the Registrar;

4.2.2. Academic officers can be considered for emeritus status following nomination by any member of the SEC where an academic officer retires from UCT and:

(i) is not eligible for election under the ordinary rules to the emeritus rank of Professor or Associate Professor; and

(ii) has served their full term(s) in office.

4.2.3 Ordinarily such officers would be expected to have served UCT for at least ten years before retirement, but Senate accepts that in cases where a person was appointed to an academic officer position from another university, the period need not be ten years. Where the SEC supports the proposal it would be put to Senate for decision.

4.2.4 Emeritus academic officers enjoy similar rights and privileges to those enjoyed by other emeritus staff.

5. Retrospective eligibility

5.1. The rules for election to emeritus status may be applied with retrospective effect in respect of any academic staff who retired in the past, but who would have been eligible under the current rules, provided they did not retire in order to take up full-time academic positions elsewhere.

5.2 The SEC reviews these retrospective applications and if approved, puts them forward to Senate for election.

6. Status of emeritus rank

- 6.1. Retired staff members retain this special rank until death.
- 6.2. All emeritus staff are retained as active members of the University on the HR data base. They are members of Convocation by virtue of their emeritus status.
- 6.3. Emeritus Professors and Emeritus Associate Professors rank senior to Professors and Associate Professors, but all rank junior to members of Council (in so far as the printed order and the position in academic processions are concerned).

7. Rights and privileges

- 7.1. In addition to their rights and privileges as retirees, emeritus staff have the following rights:
 - 7.1.1. Use of the title 'Emeritus Professor' or 'Emeritus Associate Professor', including the right to use the title in publications and official ceremonies.
 - 7.1.2. Continued opportunity to supervise doctoral students.
 - 7.1.3. Access to a staff card, purchase of a parking disc and such other rights as the Council may from time to time decide.
 - 7.1.4. Decision rights on research funds, if granted by the CFO and supported by the Dean of the Faculty or CHED, or the Director of the GSB.
- 7.2. In addition, emeritus staff may apply for
 - 7.2.1. URC research funds on proof of accredited peer-reviewed publications in the past year.
 - 7.2.2. A UCT email account.
 - 7.2.3. Library membership as for academic staff.
 - 7.2.4. Access to buildings on campus as determined by the HOD.
 - 7.2.5. Space at the discretion of the HOD & Dean.

Limitations

- 7.3. Emeritus staff do not have the right to apply for equipment.
- 7.4. The extent to which emeritus staff are involved in teaching, supervision, research and other activities of the faculty or department, or have access to university facilities, is subject to applicable UCT policies on retirement, employment equity, and is approved at the discretion of the relevant Head of Department or Dean.
- 7.5. A Dean or line manager in the case of non-academic emeriti may restrict all or some of the rights and privileges specified in clause 7 above of any emeritus staff if the Dean has reason to believe that the affected emeritus staff has conducted

themselves in a way that would clearly constitute a dismissible offence under the disciplinary policy and any accompanying code of conduct, provided that –

- 7.5.1. the affected emeritus staff has been informed of the likely decision and its basis and been given an opportunity to make a written submission within a reasonable time;
 - 7.5.2. the affected emeritus staff has been given reasons for the decision; and
 - 7.5.3. the Dean or line manager reports to SEC on the process and the reasons for the decision taken.
- 7.6. If the affected emeritus staff is aggrieved by the decision to restrict all or any of the rights and privileges on the ground specified in clause 7.5 above, they may appeal to the SEC, which shall be the final arbiter of the facts and applicable policies on behalf of Senate.
- 7.7. If the SEC does not uphold the appeal, it may inform Senate of its decision if the aggrieved emeritus staff so insists and waives the right to confidentiality pertaining to any privileged and legally protected information affecting them.