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## **Present Situation concerning promotion procedures at the University of Tirana**

### **Introduction**

Institutions of higher education in Albania carry out the basic or applied scientific research, development projects and other creative activities abide by law, aiming at achieving specific objectives. Research and promotion encourage a higher quality in education and improve the qualification of the academic staff in these institutions.

Academic staff at university, based on their activity and role, can go under any of the following categories: a) Professors, b) Docents, c) Lecturers.

The academic titles in Albania are awarded by the institutions of higher education, being evaluated, ranked and constituted by the Council of Ministers and the evaluation committee for the academic titles. The academic titles “Associate Professor”, “Emeritus Professor” and “Docent” are granted by the institutions of higher education, while “Professor” is granted by the Committee for the Academic titles. The title “Academic” is granted by the Academy of Science in accordance with the law “For the Academy of Science”.

Academic promotions at the University of Albania are pending at the present time. There is a new law on Higher Education, passed on April 2015, and we are expecting for the by-laws and regulations to be passed which will define the new procedures and criteria for promotion.

The main objective of this document is to outline the procedure and criteria followed up to now for all academic staff in relation to promotions. These procedures set out the career pathways available.

## **Promotion procedures and criteria**

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The University of Tirana is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and to the implementation of promotion procedures which accord with this policy. Academic promotions will be made regardless of Faculty or Department on the grounds of merit and performance, although account may be taken of the need to retain staff with scarce skills. Age is not itself a factor and seniority and long service do not themselves constitute grounds for promotion.

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The criteria required of each academic title are given in the generic role profiles which are available on the website of our university. All decisions on promotions will be made with reference to the relevant role profile.

This report describes our university criteria for promotion and the procedure an individual needs to follow to apply. This policy and procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. It may be amended from time to time.

## **1. Promotion of the PhD degree**

Applicants, who have completed the second cycle of study or any other program of study in our country or abroad and fulfill the academic standards of the relevant criteria of the respective institutions, have the right to apply for the third cycle of study (PhD).

The relevant academic criteria for the selection of the candidates in the third cycle of study (PhD) are determined in the statute of the institutions of the higher education, based on the recommendations of the Council of the higher education and science.

The number of candidates to be accepted for promotion in the public institutions of higher education, for the third cycle, is constituted by the Council of Ministers as proposed by the Ministry of Science and Education. The Ministry takes a decision on the proposal submitted after a preliminary discussion with the public institutions of higher education and with the recommendations of the Council of Higher Education and Science.

### ➤ The programs of the PhD degree:

- a) are programs of the third cycle of study, having an entirely academic character, which are based on scientific research and independent creative activities;
- b) take three years of academic study of 60 credits and research;

Candidates that have taken the masters degree, as defined by the Article 47, as amended, point 1.3.4, do not necessarily need to acquire 60 credits on organized theoretical study. They can present their dissertation thesis after having fulfilled all other criteria constituted by the Council of Ministers for the study program of the PhD degree. The successful candidates are awarded the degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD).

According to the PhD Regulation for the PhD program, before dissertation defense, the candidate shall fulfill the following criteria:

- a) submit a report at least once a year. The report shows the candidate's performance in compliance with his program. In cases where student is found unable to continue with his studies, he can be unregistered upon request of his mentor and approved by the Council of professors.

- b) present three scientific papers, one of which should be presented in an international scientific activity (symposium, conference, congress) and published in Proceedings, indexed with the ISBN number.
- c) publish three scientific articles in research journals. At least one of the articles should be published or accepted to be published in an international scientific journal.
- d) submit to the Council of Professors of the faculty the draft of the dissertation thesis and a summary of the thesis approved by the mentor.

The PhD candidate selects the mentor, at the time of application and submission of necessary documents to attend the third cycle of studies. Approval of the Council of Professors is needed for the assignment of the Mentor.

A researcher at the University of Tirana can work as a mentor of a PhD candidate, based on the decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 864, date 05.12.2007, as amended, point 4, if he has at least a PhD Degree from an international University. The mentor should be an associate professor or a professor and he should have carried research in the field.

## 2. Promotion of the Academic titles

Candidates for promotion will be assessed against the criteria contained within the role profile(s) to ensure they have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the role they are seeking at an acceptable level, recognizing that full proficiency in all aspects of the role may not be achievable on promotion.

In addition to University criteria, specific Faculty criteria should be referred to when submitting an application.

For the scientific and academic promotion after the PhD degree, the Council of Professors, the Evaluation Committee and the Committee for the Academic Titles are crucial to the academic ranking.

- The Council of Professors is established at faculty. All the professors at faculty shall be members of the council. The number of the professors should be seven. In case, the number of professors at this faculty is not sufficient, external professors (from other faculties in similar fields of research/teaching or visiting professors) can become members of the council.
- The Evaluation Committee is made up of 5 members. Three of them should be professors. To be appointed members of this committee, the academic researchers shall have national and international academic and scientific experience. The composition of the committee is proposed by the Council of Professors, by the coordinator of the PhD program or head of the department. The Council assigns 2 or 3 opponents, one of whom has to be an external member and within the field of study.  
The members of the ad hoc Evaluation Committees are nominated based on the Article 66 of the Statute of the University of Tirana. This committee is made up of:

- Head of the department
- A representative elected by the head of the department
- Two members elected by the Dean, one of which needs to be a representative of the Department
- A representative elected by the Rector.

The majority of the committee is made up by representatives of the respective department.

- The Ministry of Science and Education establishes the Committee for the Academic Titles. This Committee is made up of 15 members. The chair of the Committee is the Minister and all the other 14 members are academics awarded the title “Academics” or “Professors” in different fields.

The University of Tirana confers academic titles on its staff in accordance with the Article 47 applied across Albanian higher education institutions. The public higher education institutions shall encourage promotion for the full time academic staff.

The requirements and procedure at each academic rank are outlined in the following section.

### **2.1. Advancement to Lecturer**

Lecturers are part of the academic staff involved in teaching and research activities. This title is granted to all the academic staff that have a Master degree of the second cycle of studies and a PhD degree. They should have university teaching experience for at least three years after or before having been awarded the PhD degree and they should be lecturers of an academic subject at university. The academic staff, fulfilling the criteria mentioned, are awarded the title without applying for it.

### **2.2. Advancement to Docent**

This title can be granted to interested academic staff that:

- have taken the PhD degree and have a year of experience in teaching at University. The candidate who has completed the Master Degree of the second cycle of study, (the evaluation for the degree from the Committee of Evaluation should be “very good” or “excellent”) is required to have at least 5 years of university teaching experience in teaching at university.
- have prepared teaching materials such as scripts, lectures, exercises, programs of at least one academic subject or module.
- have at least presented three scientific papers, one of which should be presented in an international scientific activity (symposium, conference, congress) and published in Proceedings.
- have published two scientific articles or reviews in journals. At least one of the articles should be published or accepted to be published in an international scientific journal.

The procedures to grant the title Docent

- Docent title promotion is carried out by the Council of Professors at the respective faculty upon the candidate's request.
- The council attends an open lecture delivered by the candidate and evaluates the candidate's teaching and research activity.
- The Council of Professors takes a decision within 3 months.
- In case the application is approved, the Council submits the request to the Dean for the award of the title.

The certificate "Docent", after being signed by the Dean and the Rector is sealed and officially recorded at the institution of the higher education and Ministry.

In case the application is rejected, no new application is possible within the next 2 years.

### **2.3. Advancement from Lecturer to Associate Professor**

There are certain criteria factors that are taken into account for advancing to the rank of Associate Professor. The researcher applying for the title must:

- have at least three years of university teaching experience and have shown good teaching qualities.
- have participated and presented papers at 8 conferences and scientific meetings, 5 of which presented in international scientific activities. All these presentations need to be published in Proceedings.
- have published, after having been awarded the PhD degree, at least 5 scientific original articles. The researcher has to be the first author in at least two of them in an internationally recognized scientific journal. One of the articles has to be published in an impact factor journal<sup>1</sup>.
- have lectured an academic subject for more than two years and at the same time have prepared teaching materials such as lectures, exercises etc.

The procedures to grant the title "Associate Professor"

- The Council of Professors evaluates the documents and appoints the Evaluation Committee within a month. The committee will be constituted by seven members holding the title Professor. At least four members of the Committee should be external experts with the appropriate academic qualifications, two members should be Professors of theoretical sciences and one may be a Professor, expert in the field, coming from a University of a foreign country. If this is the case, the candidate applying for the title should have the documents submitted and the open presentation delivered in a foreign language that he and the members of the committee have knowledge of.

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<sup>1</sup> A scientific monograph published if in a foreign language, indexed with an ISBN number, is equal to 6 scientific articles. If in Albanian it is equal to 4 scientific articles published in Albania.

- The Committee of Evaluation will examine the fulfillment of the teaching and academic qualities within 3 months. The Committee of Evaluation attends at least 3 teaching sessions and invites the candidate to have an open presentation.
- The Committee of Evaluation submits a final report to the Council of Professors evaluating the candidate's research activity and his teaching/academic skills, along with the recommendation of approval or rejection of granting the title.
- The Council of Professors makes official the recommendation of the Committee of Evaluation.
- In case of approval, the candidate will be awarded the title "Associate Professor" by the Dean of the university/faculty.... The certificate "Associate Professor", after being signed by the Dean and Rector is sealed and officially recorded at the Institution of the higher education and the Ministry of Education.
- In case of rejection, no new application is possible within the next 2 years.

#### **2.4. Advancement form Associate Professor to Professor**

In order for a researcher to get the title of Professor, the candidate must:

- Have teaching experience for at least 5 years (7 years for part time lecturers) after receiving their PhD degree.
- have expressed /shown good teaching abilities and have actively participated in the institutional and academic development of higher education.
- have carried a research or teaching experience in an international academic institution for at least one year.
- be able to teach in one of the following languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian.
- have prepared and presented 15 presentations in conferences, 8 of which in internationally scientific activities and published in the proceedings.
- have published 9 original articles or reviews, 4 of which accepted by international scientific magazine and two articles published in a impact factor journal. The candidate can also publish a scientific monograph in a foreign language which counts for 6 scientific articles. A scientific monograph published in Albanian counts for 4 scientific articles published in Albania.
- have lectured a subject or a module for more than four years and at the same time have prepared teaching materials such as lectures, exercises, programs of different subjects, one of which is taught in graduate level.

The procedures to grant the title "Professor"

- The Council of Professors established at respective faculties examines the applications for the title "Professor." Candidates, who are full time employees at university, submit the documents and application to the Council of Professors at the respective faculty. Within a month, the Council decides on the procedure of evaluation.

- The Council of Professors examines the submitted documents and then sends the documents to the Senate<sup>2</sup> along with the proposal for the Evaluation Committee. The Committee of Professors will be constituted by seven members holding the title Professor. At least five members of the Committee of the Professors should be external experts with the appropriate academic qualifications, two members should be Professors of theoretical sciences and one may be a Professor, expert in the field, coming from a University of a foreign country. In this case, the candidate applying for the title should have the documents submitted and the open lecture in a foreign language that he and the members of the Committee of the Professors have knowledge of.
- Fulfillment of the conditions for the title will be examined by the Senate within a month. The Senate proposes the Evaluation Committee at the Committee for the Academic titles.
- The Committee for the Academic title, within 2 months, examines the Senate's request, appoints the Evaluation Committee and decides whether to proceed with academic evaluation process. The Committee for the Academic titles has the right to require an evaluation in written by professors of a university outside Albania or to decide that a foreign professor be part of the Evaluation Committee.
- The Evaluation Committee examines the candidate's teaching and academic abilities within 3 months. Its members attend at least 3 teaching sessions and invite the candidate to have an open scientific presentation. The candidate should deliver a part of the presentation in a foreign language he/she has knowledge of.
- The Evaluation Committee submits a final report to the Committee of the Academic titles evaluating the candidate's research activity and his teaching/academic skills, along with the recommendation for an approval or rejection of the title.
- The Committee for the Academic titles analyzes the report within 2 months. In case the application for the title is rejected, the candidate is presented with a written justification for the decision. No new application is possible within the next 2 years.

The certificate "Professor" is signed by the Minister of Science and Education and it is officially recorded by the Committee for the Academic titles.

The Rector of the University introduces the certificate to the candidate at a special ceremony.

### **The sabbatical leave**

The teaching and research staff holding the title Professor at our University may be granted a sabbatical leave every seven years for the pursuit of study or research in full compliance with article 52, Law no, 9741, date 21.07.2007 "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania, as amended. The leave permission can vary up to one year, during which the academic staff granted the sabbatical leave is not required to teach and can even attend specialized courses and trainings up to three months in other institutions.

In this case, there is a special contract that determines duties and responsibilities of parties, the institution and the staff member being granted with the sabbatical leave. Thereafter the contract is to be signed by the Rector and the interested party.

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<sup>2</sup> The Senate is the academic governing body of the University of Tirana. Its responsibility is to direct academic policy in relation to teaching and research and to assure itself that the University's academic standards are properly observed. The chair is the Rector.

## 2.5. Advancement from Professor to Academic

The title Academic can be granted to any professor, member of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Albania. In case the candidate holds the title ‘Professor’ at any institution of higher education, he/she gains the right to be awarded the title “Academic”.

## 2.6. Emeritus Professor

This title is awarded to a retired Professor in accordance with the criteria constituted by the Ministry of Science and Education. The professors awarded the title ‘Emeritus Professor’ are offered access to departmental/university resources, can be invited to deliver lectures or appointed in Committees. The title is granted in recognition of past accomplishment and a continuing relationship with the University. These individuals may continue to advise graduate students but cannot vote in the Council of Professors and Faculty Assembly elections, or in Departmental appointment and promotion decisions.

## 2.7. Doctor Honoris Causa

This title is awarded to a reputable personality of the scientific / scholarly or public life, whose merits of progress in science, education, culture, and arts have significantly contributed to the development of the country. This title is granted by the institutions of higher education after the approval of the Committee for the Academic titles.

## Problems with promotion

One of the main problems is that it can be quite difficult to secure a permanent position even within the same institution. To obtain a permanent position, the candidate needs well documented research and teaching experience. In terms of publications, candidates are expected to have at least three articles in good journals and proceedings of articles presented in international conferences, which in turn require expenses covered by the individual himself. No funds offered to the academic staff in these terms.

Another barrier is the fact that young scholars are supposed to focus both on teaching and research and it is only the latter that matters in the Research Evaluation Framework (REF), which is strongly focused on research and impact. With high teaching loads, young scholars are often not able to improve their research and publication record, while this is crucial for the REF.

The academic climate in Albania nowadays is largely Research Excellence Framework driven. To obtain funding it is very important for the institutions to prove research results and this affects the conditions and promotion opportunities for academic staff. For individual scholars, it is becoming increasingly important to show the "impact" potential of research. However, since REF evaluation takes place almost every year most of the academic staff is ‘rushing’ to get promoted in order to get a permanent position at work.

In addition, the institutions of higher education should work on increasing the level of awareness of researchers in the University of Tirana on the ethical issues and standards in research, related to data protection, privacy, confidentiality, plagiarism which contributes to enhancing not only original research but also very good quality.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to mention that the University in Albania is committed to the full range of academic responsibilities: research, teaching, and service. Faculties at the University of Tirana, in the ordinary course of their development, are working on determining the weight of these various commitments, and adjust them from time to time during their careers, in response to their individual, professional development. Such adaptability and flexibility are hallmarks of respected institutions of higher education in our country because they are contributing to establishing and maintaining the excellence of university and to fulfilling the educational and social role of the institution.

It is important that the University has the processes in place to support the academic development of its own staff. To be promoted the candidate aspiring an academic pursuit must demonstrate sustained performance. Generally, it is not possible to demonstrate sustained performance in research or teaching within a year of appointment or promotion.

Broadly speaking there is a strong emphasis on research aspects or research combined with teaching at the University of Tirana nowadays.

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The person responsible for package 2