1 Executive Summary

The University of Tasmania’s strategic plan, *Open to Talent: Strategic Plan 2012-Onwards*, outlines an ambitious vision for UTAS. If the University is to achieve its lofty ambitions, its staff must aspire to – and ultimately attain – high levels of achievement, informed by international standards and expectations, and at least comparable with the strongest performers in the best Australian universities.

In this context, this document defines minimum performance expectations in the four areas of academic work, namely research, learning and teaching, community and internal service. While it specifies minimum expectations, it is anticipated that many staff will aspire to – and increasingly achieve – performance levels above these minima. The document provides a reference point for:

- Individual staff to reflect on and evaluate their performance and to plan their career development
- Performance managers in their goal setting and performance review conversations with staff
- Applicants and decision-makers in recruitment, confirmation, promotion and similar contexts
- The further development and implementation of policies and practices with respect to recruitment, confirmation, promotion, performance management and professional development.

The document is relevant to all academic staff.

The starting point is an academic with a balance of research and learning and teaching responsibilities, with lesser contributions to community and internal service, approximating a 40%-40%-20% workload allocation. In the following sections, some guidance is given on extending these expectations to other contexts, for example research only appointments or teaching intensive workload allocations. Likewise, adjustments should be made for academics on fractional appointments and for other individual circumstances.

The document also points to key elements of an institutional policy and practice framework that will support high performance of academic staff.

The performance expectations identified here will be revised regularly, at least every two years. It is anticipated that the new performance expectations for community and internal service will be reviewed in late 2014.
2 Aligning Strategic Ambitions and Individual Performance

The University’s Strategic Plan, *Open to Talent: Strategic Plan 2012-Onwards*, states that:

Over the next 10 years, UTAS will recapture the energy of our founding spirit, harness the momentum of recent achievements, tackle areas of weakness and make the most of our defining characteristics...

This involves a focus on three priorities – research, students and community – across each of which an ambitious vision is sketched in *Open to Talent*.

Fulfilling these ambitions is wholly dependent on the people who work at the University:

UTAS can only ever be as good as the people who choose to work with us... Realisation of the vision outlined in *Open to Talent* is dependent on a talented workforce, committed to the innovative thinking required to conceptualise and operationalise the strategy, and the high levels of achievement required to accomplish our objectives.

Aligning the efforts of individuals with the ambitions of *Open to Talent* is therefore a fundamental requirement for success.

Communication of objectives and clarification of responsibilities and classifications will assist staff to understand how their endeavours contribute to UTAS. Clear articulation of performance expectations, including definition of the ‘UTAS academic’, will provide guidance for confirmation and promotion...

*The UTAS Academic* is designed to meet that need. After some introductory comments on the overall characteristics of and multiple forms and combinations of contributions made by University of Tasmania academic staff and the institutional policy and practice framework that supports him/her, it provides detailed statements of minimum performance expectations in the four areas of academic work, namely research, learning and teaching, community and internal service. While it specifies minimum expectations, it is anticipated that many staff will aspire to – and increasingly achieve – performance levels above these minima.

The document and the statements of minimum performance expectations herein provide a reference point for:

- Individual staff to reflect on and evaluate their performance and to plan their career development
- Performance managers in their goal setting and performance review conversations with staff
- Applicants and decision-makers in recruitment, confirmation, promotion and similar contexts
- The further development and implementation of policies and practices with respect to recruitment, confirmation, promotion, performance management and professional development.

In some areas, the performance expectations can be implemented very quickly, for example with respect to individual staff members reflecting on their own performance and career development, informing medium-term goal setting and recruitment of new staff. In other areas, implementation will necessarily be staged; for example, in academic promotions the performance expectations will be a mandatory reference point only from 2015.

*The UTAS Academic* complements the *Academic Workload Guidelines*¹ adopted in 2012, under the *Academic Staff Agreement 2013-2016*², which provide guidelines for the negotiation of individual

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¹ UTAS *Academic Workload Guidelines* are available on the Human Resources Policy webpage at [https://secure.utas.edu.au/academic-workload-models/home](https://secure.utas.edu.au/academic-workload-models/home)
academic workloads in any given year at school or organisational unit level and are not intended to define performance expectations.

2.1 The UTAS Academic

If the University is to achieve its lofty ambitions, its staff must aspire to – and ultimately attain – high levels of achievement, informed by international standards and expectations, and at least comparable with the strongest performers in the best Australian universities. Across the three priority areas identified in the UTAS Strategic Plan – research, students and community – such achievement might be manifested through evidence of:

- excellence
- scholarship
- significance or impact of outcomes
- intellectual and organisational leadership, particularly for staff at more senior levels.

To quote the UTAS Strategic Plan again, ‘to achieve our goals we must ensure that the research performance of the majority of UTAS staff is at international standard’, although in some cases – such as when industry-commissioned research outcomes must be provided initially in confidential reports rather than through journal papers – this may not be fully evident in conventional metrics. There are also comparable imperatives across the other key priority areas. Outstanding teaching practice must be informed by a pedagogy based on substantive educational scholarship as well as sound disciplinary knowledge, and tested against appropriate benchmarks inside and outside the University. In the case of community, the volume and nature of academic contributions will vary substantially, but they will invariably be aligned with institutional priorities and informed by disciplinary expertise, scholarship, and a concern to maximise effectiveness and the leadership contribution.

Beyond the three priority areas, internal service to the University (or ‘administration’) remains a necessary contributor to institutional success and, done well, to the performance and career development of other staff. Virtually all academics will make some contributions of this kind and, for a minority, they will form a major component of their work. However, the focus must be on efficiency and effectiveness – producing outcomes to support the fulfilment of the institution’s mission and goals as economically as possible – to avoid any sense of internal service becoming an end in itself. Again, key considerations must be excellence, significance/impact and leadership, informed by a scholarly appreciation of institutional priorities, disciplinary norms and good business practice.

There are multiple models of contribution to the University. Employment contracts may specify either research only or teaching and research duties; within the latter grouping, workload allocation categories include research intensive, balanced research/teaching, teaching intensive or a proposed teaching scholar category. An additional consideration here is the emerging need to reflect on whether the growing numbers of pre-degree and VET students should be taught by academics with ‘balanced’ teaching and research contracts, or whether in the future a different type of employment arrangement may be more appropriate.

UTAS embraces multiple models of engagement with the University, encompassing full-time, fractional and honorary (voluntary) contributions. The latter includes the work of professionals from other organisations as well as contributions by those retired from paid employment.  

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2 The Academic Staff Agreement 2013-2016 is available at http://www.utas.edu.au/enterprise-bargaining

3 UTAS Adjunct and Clinical Titles Policy
The mix of activities across the three priorities and one enabler will vary between individuals and, in many cases over the course of a career, according to the nature of the employment contract, level of engagement, negotiated workload mix, the needs of the organisational unit and the institution, and aptitude and interest. The form and number of the contributions – for example, the nature and number of research outcomes – will also depend on discipline and seniority.

### 2.2 Performance Expectations

*The UTAS Academic* specifies performance expectations for academic staff and provides a series of performance benchmarks. The latter assume a ‘balanced’ academic role with a balance of teaching and research, and lesser contributions to a combination of community and internal service; they should be adjusted appropriately to suit other circumstances.

The Academic Promotions Policy 2013[^4] and the minimum standards for academic levels that were nationally agreed in 2001–2[^5] provide an indicative framework for understanding – in a very generic form – performance expectations of UTAS academic staff at each level. Later sections of this document provide more specific benchmarks.

**Level A**

A Level A academic is expected to work at the school level with support and mentoring from more senior academic staff. He/she is expected to develop his/her expertise in and contributions to research and learning and teaching, and will progressively gain an increasing degree of professional autonomy, within the framework of institutional and organisational unit priorities and performance expectations.

**Level B**

A Level B academic staff member is expected to make a significant overall contribution to the University and organisational unit across the mix of activities in which they are involved. He/she will make increasingly independent contributions to teaching, undertake independent research and/or scholarship and show evidence of individual initiative but may continue to be mentored by more senior staff.

**Level C**

A Level C academic staff member is required to demonstrate excellent academic merit, evidenced by a very significant overall contribution in the categories of academic activity in which they are involved. He/she is expected to make significant original contributions to research and/or scholarship, take significant responsibilities in learning and teaching, and provide a significant degree of leadership in research, learning and teaching, community contributions and/or internal service at school, faculty and University level, working towards gaining national recognition.

**Level D**

A Level D academic staff member is required to demonstrate excellent academic merit, evidenced by a very significant overall contribution in the categories of academic activity in which he/she is engaged. He/she will have attained an outstanding reputation at the national or international level and will continue to make significant original and innovative contributions to the advancement of scholarship, research, learning and teaching and/or community activity, and often to organisational

[^4]: [UTAS Academic Staff Promotions Policy](http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/372316/Academic-staff-promotions-policy.pdf)

or institutional leadership. He/she is also expected to play an increasingly important role in supporting the career development of more junior staff.

**Level E**

A Level E academic staff member is required to demonstrate outstanding academic merit, evidenced by an outstanding overall contribution to the academic activities in which he/she is engaged. He/she is expected to provide strong leadership and foster excellence in key areas of expertise and will have attained recognition (normally at the international level) as an eminent authority in the discipline. A Level E academic will continue to make original, innovative and distinguished contributions to scholarship, research and/or learning and teaching, as well as providing intellectual, organisational or institutional leadership. A key expectation of a Level E academic is that he/she will play an active role in the career development of more junior staff, both through formal roles such as discipline leadership, administrative headships and performance management and less formally through mentoring, the provision of advice, leadership of teaching teams and inclusion in research teams.

As professors, Level E academics have a range of special responsibilities. In 2012, Academic Senate adopted the following statement that attempts to capture and codify these responsibilities. It draws on comparable statements from the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Australia.

A Professor is expected to exercise a special responsibility in providing leadership and in fostering excellence in research and scholarship, learning and teaching, service to and leadership of the discipline, community and/or industry, and service to and leadership of the University. The role of a Professor at the University of Tasmania may be expressed as follows:

1. **Research and scholarship**
   Professors provide leadership in their research discipline within a national and international context. Professors foster the research and scholarship of other individuals and groups within their School, within their discipline grouping and within related disciplines. The manner in which Professors carry out these roles will be in accordance with the axiological norms in practice within their discipline. In many disciplines, where research environments are dependent on the ability to attract external funds, Professors secure substantial grants which support teams including junior staff, postgraduate and honours students. In other disciplines, Professors conduct research and scholarship with a more independent tenor. In all disciplines, Professors place great importance upon guiding and assisting more junior staff in developing their capacity for teaching and research, and in more generally developing the careers of these junior staff. As part of this role, Professors introduce research students and colleagues to useful networks inside and outside the University.

2. **Learning and teaching**
   Professors seek continuing improvement in academic standards rather than merely maintaining them, and make a distinguished contribution to teaching in the University. A Professor provides leadership in curriculum development, design of courses, and innovations in the delivery of teaching in the discipline, taking account of national and international developments. At different stages of their career, Professors carry a teaching load, are involved in some of the large classes and teach not only postgraduate students but also undergraduate (including first year) students. Professors are role models in their relationships with students and with professional staff at all levels, and foster collegiality within the University. They are accessible in the School/Faculty/Institute and take part in the community life of the University, including ceremonies where degrees are awarded to students of the School and to persons honoured by the University.
3. **Contribution to discipline**
   Professors play a significant part in shaping their discipline or sub-discipline in the national and international academic community, and lead its development in the University. As a result, Professors participate in the appropriate national and international organisations of their discipline or profession, including relevant industry bodies and associations. In most fields, such international involvement and standing should be clearly evident. A Professor will serve on expert committees, be willing to participate in reviews and to work at a national and international level.

4. **Contribution to community**
   Professors have a responsibility to engage with the community and to advance the image and reputation of the University locally, nationally and internationally. That image will be enhanced by excellent research and teaching, the receipt of awards and participation in major conferences. Community involvement might also be demonstrated through a role as a public intellectual who contributes to the nation’s culture and institutions. This might take many forms, including media commentary and the preparation of opinion articles, speaking at public events, and visits to schools and other community organisations. Further community engagement might include giving talks to community groups, taking a constructive and informed part in debate on matters of concern to the community, engagement with local and international industry or business activities, and engagement with local and state governments.

5. **Contribution to University leadership**
   Professors contribute to policy formation and management of their School, their Faculty or Institute, and the University (through Academic Senate) where from time to time they have a contribution to make. Professors help foster constructive intellectual debate, seek to uphold and model the UTAS Values, and help to advance the UTAS goals and vision. They play a constructive role in appointment, confirmation and promotion processes for academic and professional staff. Professors from time to time will take on senior executive roles in the University, Faculty/Institute and/or School.

A Professor at UTAS will not be expected to maintain leadership in all of the above areas at once, but over time it is expected that significant contributions will be made to each of the activities shown. As is appropriate to their title and level, Associate Professors will be expected to make substantive contributions to a similar range of activities.

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**2.3 Supporting the UTAS Academic**

UTAS academics have high aspirations for their own performance and the development of their careers. The University has both an interest in and an obligation to provide an institutional framework, driven by its values but exemplified in its policies, procedures and practices that support, facilitate and encourage high performance. As competition for institutional reputation and status collides with an ever sharpening competition to attract, develop and retain the best staff, the imperative to align University and individual ambitions underpinned by such a framework becomes increasingly pressing.

As recommended by the People Working Party from the 2009 Your Voice @ UTAS process:

The University will be an exemplary employer, characterised by good governance, effective leadership, ethical conduct, collegiality and professionalism. It will attract and retain quality staff and embed a high-performance culture throughout the organisation.

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To enable the achievement of its goals of excellence, high academic ranking and national and global reputation, the University will:

- Provide a supportive, healthy and flexible workplace with employment conditions responsive to the needs of individuals
- Provide encouragement, opportunities and assistance to all staff, enabling career development and achievement of staff to their highest potential
- Emphasise the principles of mutual respect and mutual responsibility, while valuing diversity and the positive contributions of all members of the University community.

Policies and practices of particular relevance include:

- Recruitment processes that are genuinely competitive and purposefully seek outstanding candidates from a field that is at least national in scope, and in many cases international, and that ensure that appointments are made in the context of the performance expectations outlined in this paper.
- Probation processes that align with institutional ambitions and priorities as well as the performance expectations laid out in *Opening UTAS to Talent: The UTAS Academic* and that support new staff to achieve agreed requirements.
- Confirmation processes that are not only rigorous but transparent and fair.
- Academic promotion policies that, as well as being rigorous, transparent and fair, align with institutional ambitions and priorities, recognise and reward the multiple forms of academic contributions to UTAS, reference the performance expectations outlined in this paper and are benchmarked nationally and internationally against other universities of high standing.
- A staff classification system that defines and recognises the scope of academic work and allows the appropriate allocation of individuals to academic or non-academic categories of employment.
- A performance and career development process that provides support for individual career development and aligns individual goals with the priorities and ambitions of the University and organisational unit.
- A set of professional and organisational development programs, either internal or articulated with external offerings that support the fulfilment of individual and institutional ambitions.
- A comprehensive system of appropriately recognising and rewarding excellence among academic staff.
- A transparent workload management system that aligns the day-to-day endeavours of the individual with institutional responsibilities and priorities, discourages wasteful or non-essential activity and ensures the optimum use of staff time.
- A policy framework for effectively facilitating and embracing the professional contributions of adjunct, clinical and university associate title-holders to the activities and ambitions of the University.

The details of these priorities and the institutional framework that encompass them will be spelled out in the forthcoming Staff Experience Strategy that will support the Strategic Plan.

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