

Does teaching advance your academic career?

Perspectives on promotion procedures  
in UK engineering schools

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# Over the past 10-15 years...

- Significant international debate on **WHY** engineering education needs to change
- Some consensus on **WHAT** educational approaches deliver the graduates required for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- ... but **HOW** do you make it happen....



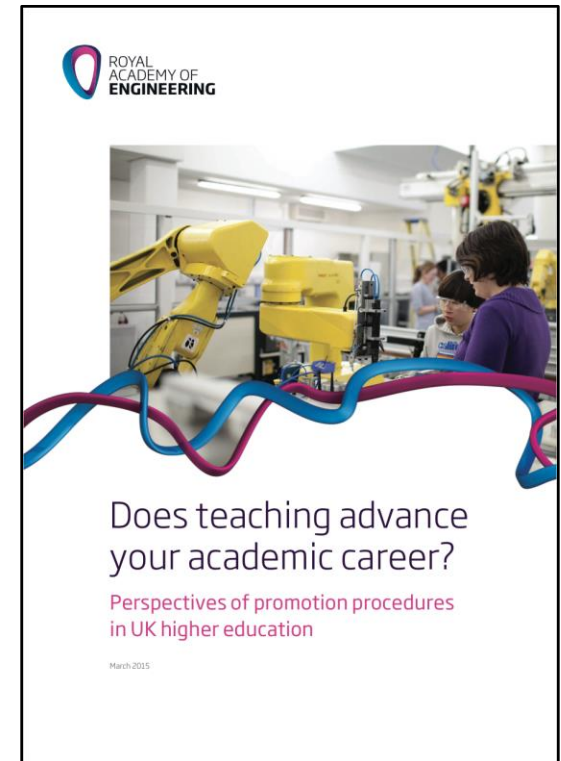
“the academic rewards procedures, and their apparent bias towards research, appear to act as a major deterrent to academics engaging with or supporting any program of educational change”



## Royal Academy of Engineering study:

To what extent are university promotion procedures seen to incentivise teaching achievement in engineering?

Capturing the perceptions and experiences of the role teaching plays in UK academic career advancement from various levels of the university hierarchy



# Sources of evidence

- On-line survey (n=604) of UK engineering academics, researchers and senior managers
- One-to-one interviews (n=52) exploring the issues raised in more depth

# Key issues addressed

- A. To what extent do the engineering academic community perceive that teaching is adequately rewarded in university promotion procedures?
- B. What are the challenges associated with rewarding teaching achievement amongst engineering academics?
- C. What practical advice can be given to engineering schools and the wider academic community to ensure that teaching is appropriately recognised and rewarded?

A. To what extent do the engineering academic community perceive that teaching is adequately rewarded in university promotion procedures?

In your view, how important would you like these factors to be in promotion to professor?

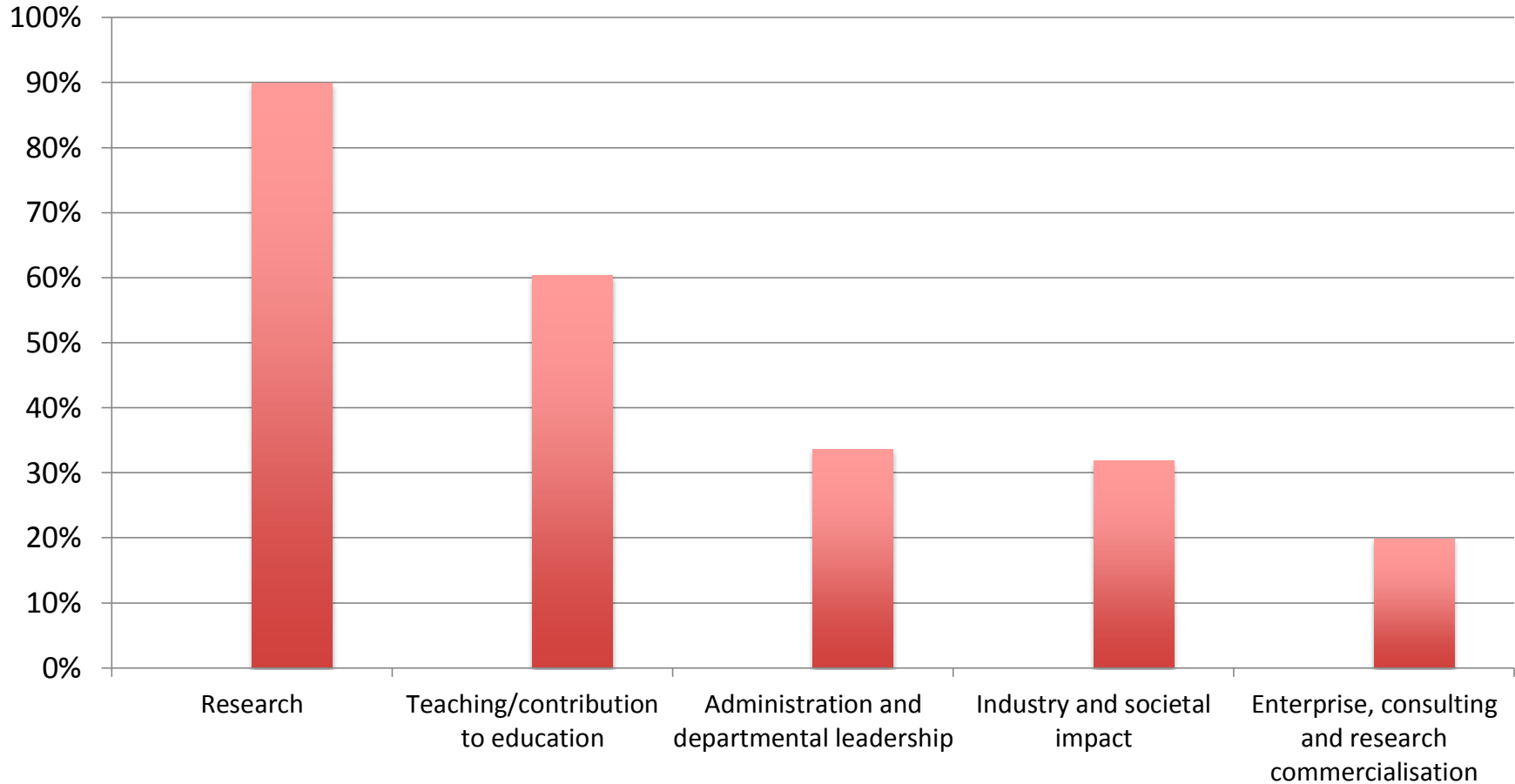
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|   | Very Important   | Somewhat important   | Not very important   | Don't know   |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Research  | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teaching/contribution to education                    | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Administration and departmental leadership            | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Industry and societal impact                          | <input type="checkbox"/> ?   | <input type="checkbox"/> ?   | <input type="checkbox"/> ?   | <input type="checkbox"/> ?   |
| Enterprise, consulting and research commercialisation | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

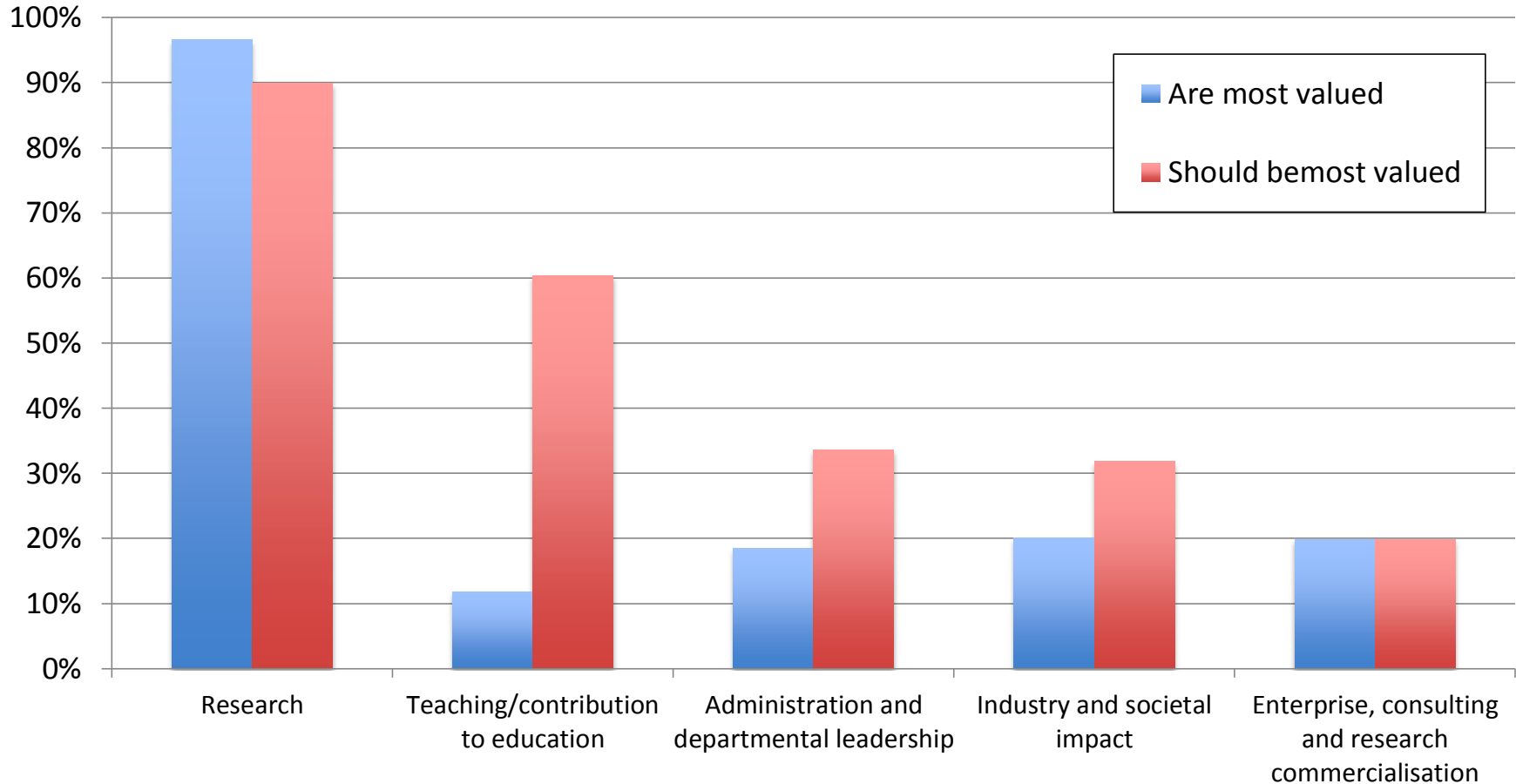
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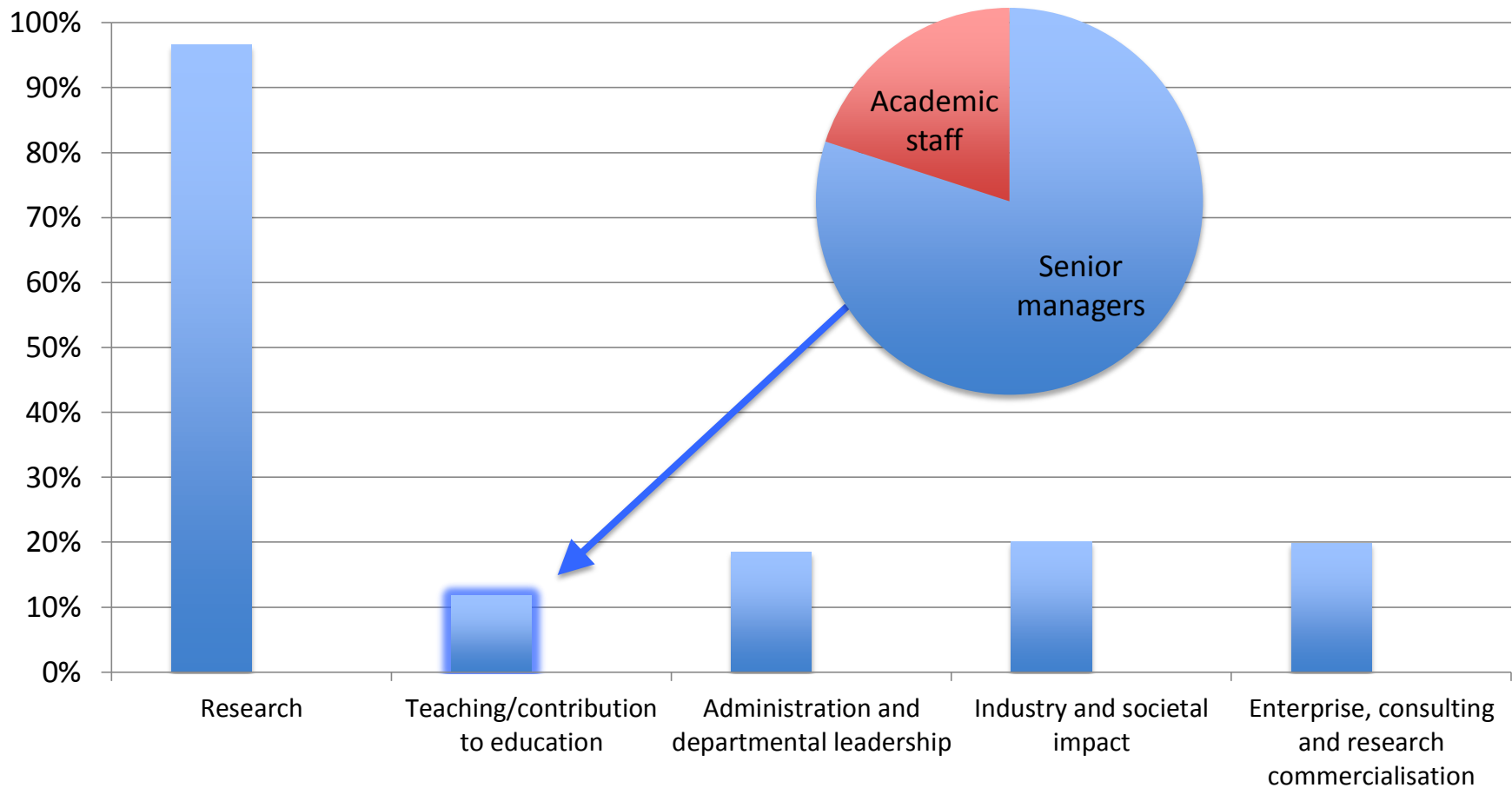
# Priority attached to key criteria in promotion to professorship



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# Views of academic staff

*“teaching is second-tier activity when it comes to promotion”*

- Universities were seen to adopt a *“threshold level for acceptable teaching”*, achievement beyond which was seen to *“add little value to your promotion case”*
- Changes to promotion system seen to be confined to teaching-focused career track

# Views of university managers

*“the reality is that people who perform well as teachers will get promoted”*

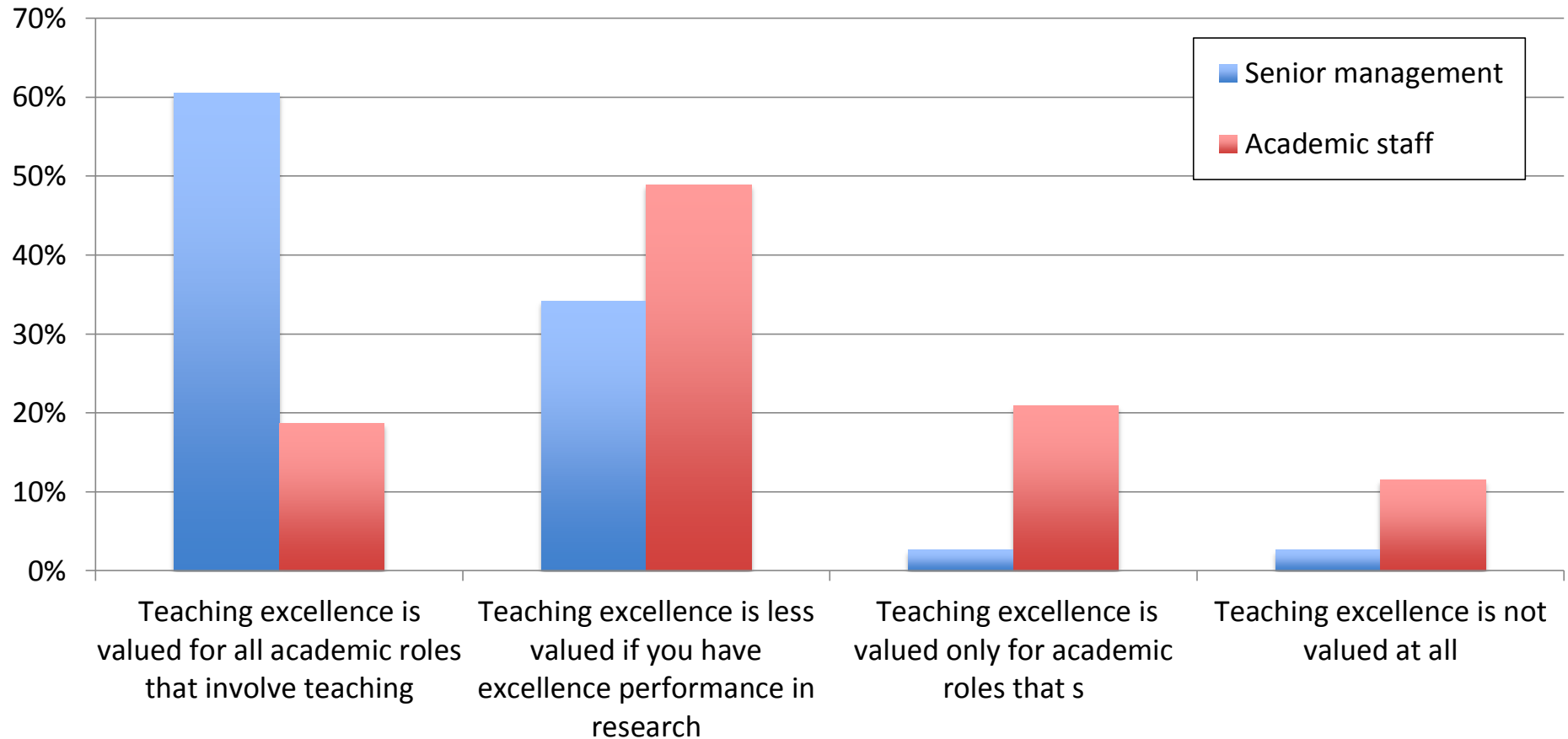
- Reported a marked change in the recognition given to teaching in the past decade, prompted by the marketisation of UK higher education and increased public scrutiny of university performance
- Many noted *“genuine consequences for poor teaching”*

## When applying for a promotion at your university, which of the following statements best reflects the value given to teaching excellence?

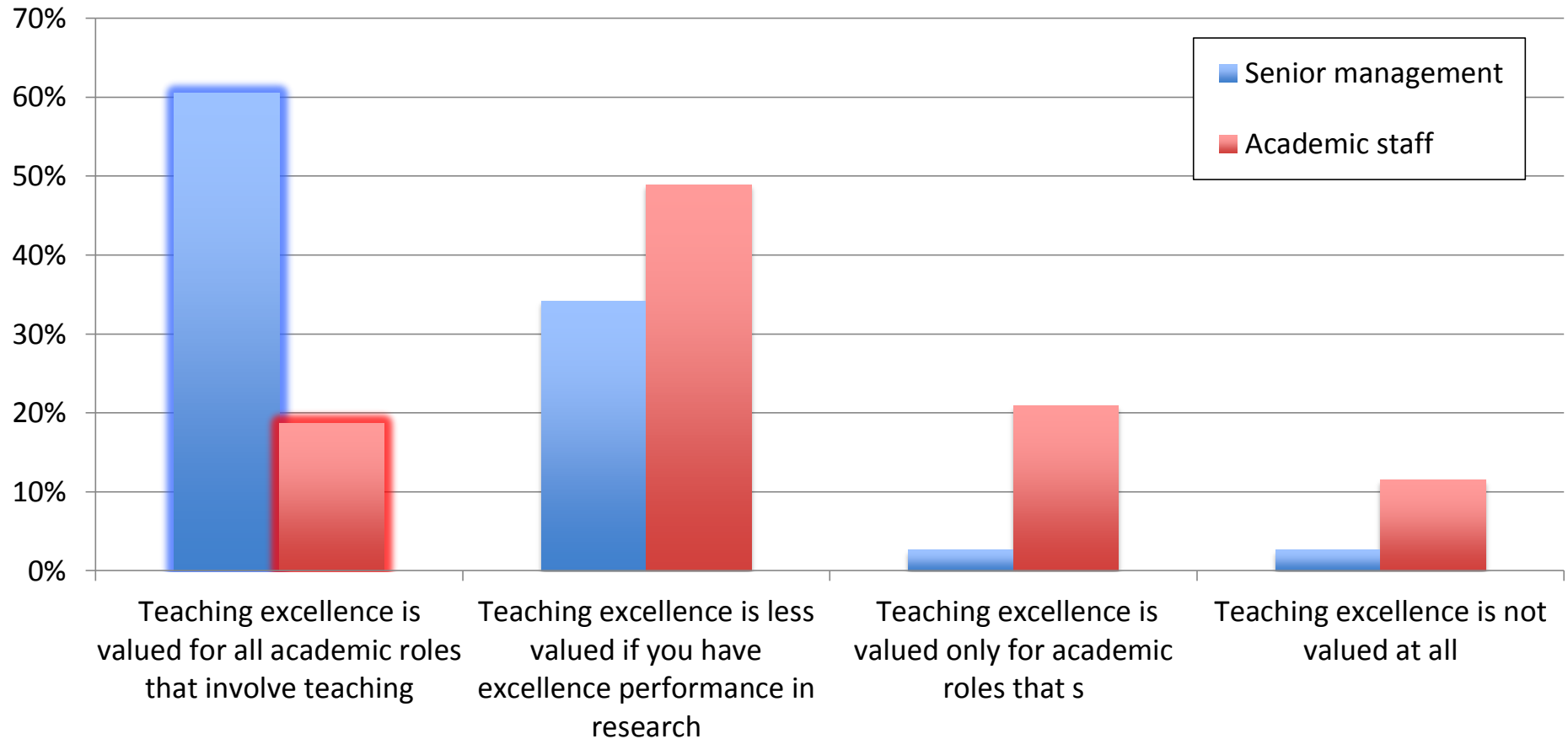
- Teaching excellence is valued for all academic roles that include any teaching
- Teaching excellence is less valued if you have excellent performance in research and administration
- Teaching excellence is valued only for academic roles that specialise in teaching
- Teaching excellence is not valued at all

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# Which statement best reflects the priority given to teaching in promotions?

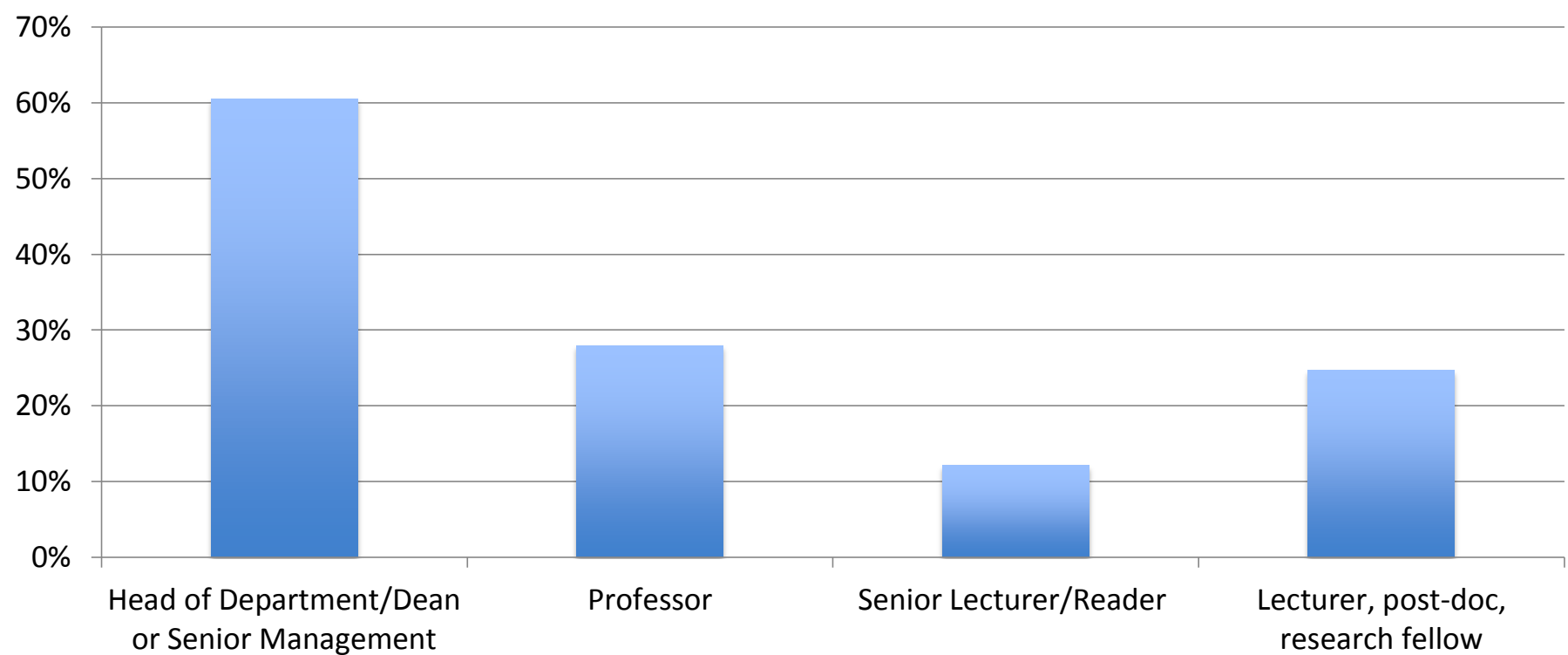


# Which statement best reflects the priority given to teaching in promotions?





# *“Teaching excellence is valued for all roles that involve teaching”*



Survey respondents agreeing with the statement *‘teaching excellence is valued for all academic roles that include any teaching’*

B. What are the challenges associated with rewarding teaching achievement amongst engineering academics?



1. Research-driven university culture
2. Difficulties in demonstrating international leadership in teaching
3. University policies that reinforce academics' negative perceptions
4. A policy-practice gap
5. Departmental resource allocation models
6. Teaching metrics seen as poor indicators of quality and impact

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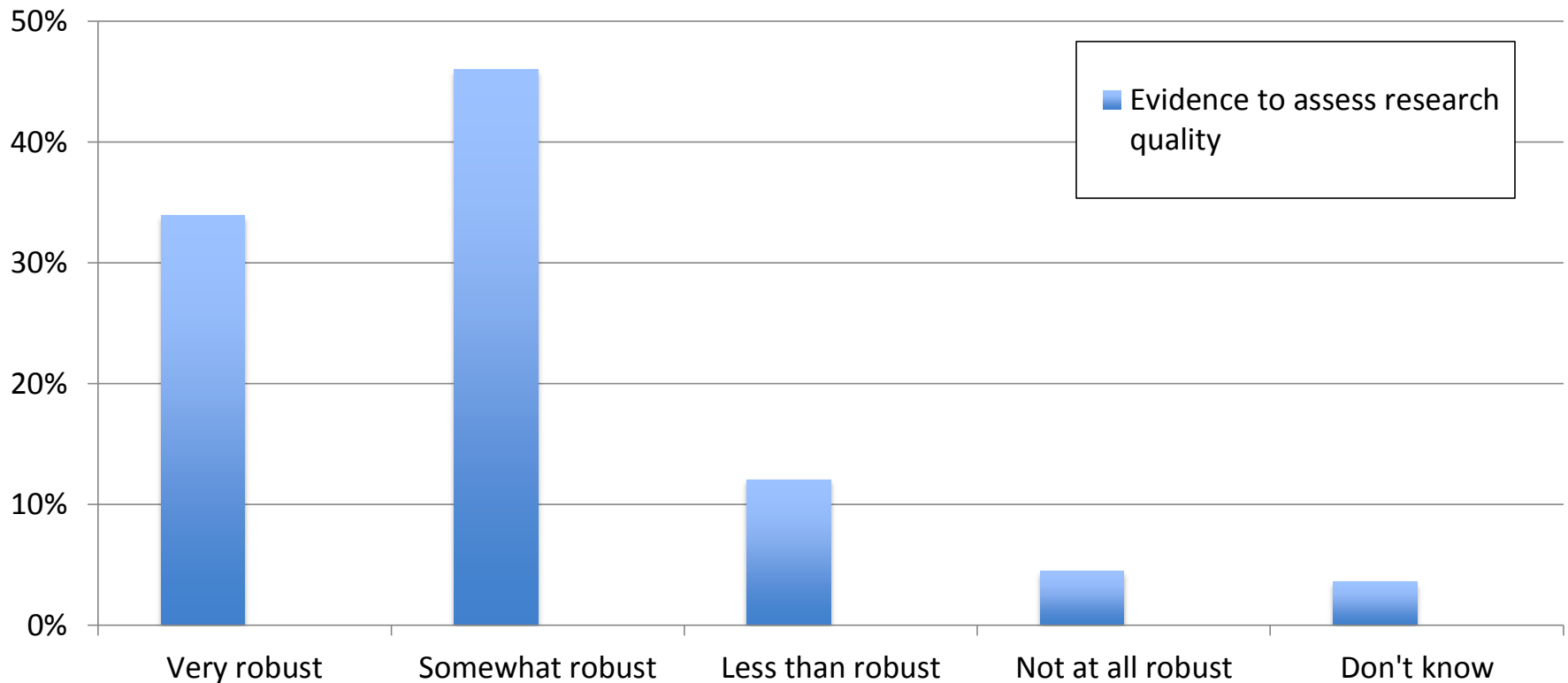
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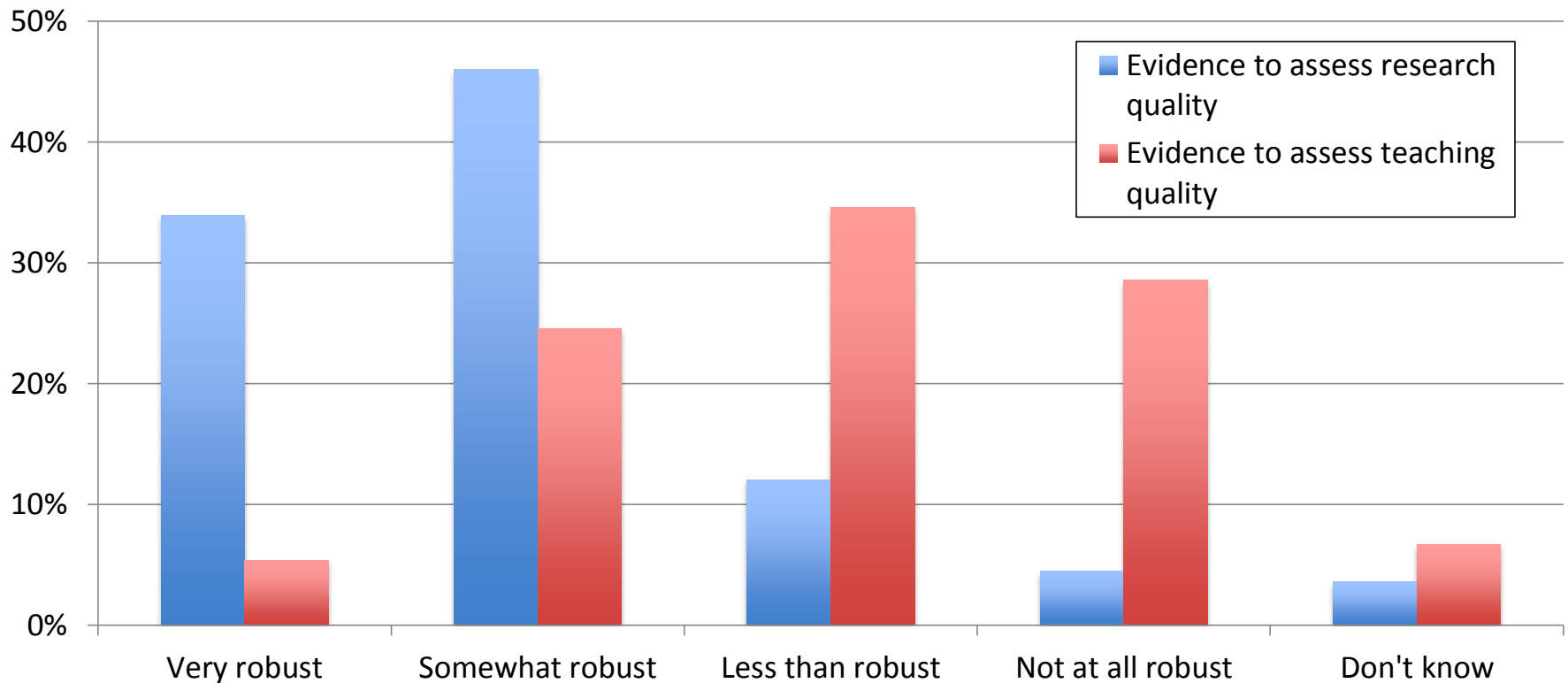
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# *“Finding a good yardstick to measure what good teaching is”*



Survey responses to the question *“how robust are sources of evidence used in assessment of research/teaching quality for promotion to professorship?”*

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Survey responses to the question *“how robust are sources of evidence used in assessment of research/teaching quality for promotion to professorship?”*

# *“Finding a good yardstick to measure what good teaching is”*

- Metrics used to evaluate teaching contribution were described as “wooly” and are seen as poor indicators of achievement and impact.
- As a result, they are often accorded little value by candidates, when preparing their case, and by promotion boards, when reviewing them
- In contrast, internationally-accepted metrics of research achievement were seen to make such evidence “*more more portable*”
- Many teaching-focused staff rely heavily on external teaching awards for promotion cases

C. What practical advice can be given to engineering schools and the wider academic community to ensure that teaching is appropriately recognised and rewarded?

# Recommendations

1. Improve the transparency of promotion decisions
2. Develop a more robust set of metrics to evidence teaching achievement
3. Improve support offered to candidates to identify and collect teaching-based evidence for promotions
4. Re-align departmental resource allocations to reflect teaching quality as well as student numbers

Measuring and evidencing teaching  
achievement for the purposes of promotion

# Small group discussion:

- **Group 1: Evaluation of current metrics:**
  - Which aspects of teaching achievement are most and least well represented by current metrics?
- **Group 2: Consideration of new metrics:**
  - What other metrics of teaching achievement have potential for use within the UK promotion system?
- **Group 3: Implementing metrics in practice:**
  - How feasible would it be for teaching metrics to be recognised between universities, allowing them to be ‘portable’?



# Please record the three primary sources of evidence used in your University to demonstrate teaching achievement during promotion procedures

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Volume of teaching/contact hours delivered                      | 2. Student evaluation scores                                     |
| 3. Classroom/teaching observations                                 | 4. Receipt of institutional/national teaching award              |
| 5. Self-reflective journal/record on personal approach to teaching | 6. Research income/publications in teaching and learning         |
| 7. Measures of student learning gains                              | 8. Measures of institutional leadership in teaching and learning |
| 9. Measured of national/international influence in teaching        | 10. Other evidence not listed above (please specify)             |

Thank you

For anyone interested in supporting the  
study further, please get in touch

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