

2026 Staff Bonus Scheme Guidelines

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1. Purpose

The purpose of the 2026 staff bonus scheme is to recognise and reward exceptional contributions made by individual colleagues during 2025, in line with the University's Values. The scheme is designed to be rigorous, fair, transparent and objective.

Bonus payments will be available for the top 10% of performers, will be based on the evidence provided, and will comprise either:

- A one-off, non-consolidated bonus payment, **or**
- An increment into/within the contribution zone (only available for those in Grades 1-7 in Professional/Technical/Research roles who are no longer receiving automatic annual pay increments)

The one-off bonus will be considered on the basis of exceptional individual contributions in the last year which meet the criteria in section 3.

An additional pay increment into/within the contribution zone will be available (as an alternative to a one-off bonus) for eligible individuals in Professional/Technical/Research roles in Queen Mary Grades 1-7 who additionally meet the criteria for such pay progression.

The criteria for a pay increment into/within the contribution zone are that the colleague:

- ✓ has provided ongoing, exceptionally high standards of customer service (with demonstrable impact on the service provided and/or the reputation of the School, Institute PS Department or Team); and/or
- ✓ has delivered exceptional performance in their role at a level that is above the usual role requirements, which has been sustained beyond one year, and is reasonably expected to continue to do so on an ongoing basis.

2. Eligibility

To qualify for either a one-off bonus or a pay increment via this year's scheme, staff in the top 10% of performers must have completed all the mandatory training required for their role at the time the nomination is submitted. Line managers are responsible for checking that all mandatory training has been completed by the due dates.

Further details about Queen Mary's mandatory training, including links to the courses are available in the [CPD training site](#) and on the [mandatory training page](#).

One-off bonus payments

Eligibility for a one-off bonus payment covers all Queen Mary employees in Grades 1-8 (and in equivalent clinical grades), provided they have no unexpired formal warnings on their file for either conduct or capability.

Nominations for a one-off bonus may be made for those top 10% of colleagues who have at least 6 months' continuous service with Queen Mary by Tuesday 31 March 2026 (that is, who started on or before 30 September 2025).

Staff must still be employed by Queen Mary at the time of the bonus payment (anticipated to be 24 July 2026); no payments will be made for those who are no longer employed by the University at that date.

Pay increments

Pay progression into/within the contribution zone is potentially available as an alternative to a one-off bonus payment for the top performing staff in Professional, Technical and Research roles in Queen Mary Grades 1-7 who no longer receive automatic annual pay increments, provided they have no unexpired formal warnings on their file for either conduct or capability.

The following staff are already eligible for pay progression via other reward schemes and are therefore ineligible for an additional pay increment under the staff bonus scheme, however, they are still eligible to be considered for a one-off bonus payment:

- Academic staff in Grades 1-7 (Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Readers), who have the opportunity for further pay progression via the academic promotions process.
- Those in clinical grades who receive pay progression through their NHS pay band.
- Professors and Professional Services (PS) staff in Grade 8 who have their pay progression considered via the separate Professorial and PS Grade 8 Review processes.

Nominations for a pay increment may be made for those top performing eligible colleagues who have at least 12 months' continuous service with Queen Mary by Tuesday 31 March 2026 (therefore a start date on or before 31 March 2025).

3. Criteria for Awards

For a bonus nomination to be successful, it must demonstrate that the contribution meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Showing an exceptional commitment beyond that normally required of employees at that grade
- Successfully tackling an unplanned or unexpected project or incident of complexity
- Demonstrating exceptional flexibility which contributed directly to the achievement of School, Institute, PS Department or Team objectives
- Contributing ideas which have led to greater efficiency, cost/time savings, improved quality etc, and which contributed to the achievement of School, Institute, PS Department or Team objectives
- Overcoming significant obstacles to achieve a task or goal with positive outcomes for the university or students
- Completing an activity or project to an exceptional standard and with demonstrable impact e.g. savings in time, resources or money, or positive impact on student experience, or impact on the university's reputation/community.

A pay increment into/within the contribution zone (for those in Grades 1-7 no longer receiving automatic pay increments) may be considered where the contribution additionally meets one or both of the following criteria:

- The provision of ongoing, exceptionally high standards of customer service, with demonstrable impact on the service provided and/or the reputation of the School, Institute PS Department or Team
- Evidence of the longer-term impact of exceptional performance, at a level that is above the usual role requirements or expectations, sustained for longer than one year and reasonably expected to continue on an ongoing basis.

The nomination should also include how the contribution has been delivered in line with University Values, not just what has been delivered. Please click on the link for further details on the [Values in action](#).

4. Nomination Process

The online nomination form and process is available on the [HR website](#).

Managers/Heads/Directors only can nominate staff for an individual bonus or a pay increment. Staff may not nominate themselves. Only the top performing 10% of staff should be put forward for consideration, so a line manager that has fewer than 10 employees should discuss with their line management any nominations they may be considering, so that this falls within 10% of a wider grouping of employees.

All nominations for eligible staff will be considered provided that the relevant on-line form is:

- Completed in full and according to the guidelines, and
- Submitted by the published deadlines (as shown in section 7)

All nominations must be made via the individual's own substantive Department, School, or Institute. A Department/School/Institute should not directly nominate individuals from other areas; this should be done in consultation with the substantive employing area who may submit a nomination if they consider it appropriate.

Only supported nominations will be considered by the relevant Panel. A bonus nomination must be supported by the Head of Department/School/Institute. Nominations for those who are in Professional Services (or professional/technical career families within an academic School or Institute) must also be supported by the Professional Services Director or Faculty Director of Operations (FDO) to be considered by the relevant Panel.

For nominations for senior faculty Professional Services staff such as School/Institute Strategic Managers, a Head of School/Institute Director may be invited to contribute to the nomination process.

Whether or not the nomination is supported by the line manager's own manager, the on-line nomination form should be completed by the published deadline (as shown in section 7). All nominations for each Department/School/Institute will then be shared (via a summary file) with the relevant Head of School, Institute Director, Professional Services Director or FDO (for faculty professional/technical services staff), to carry out a consistency review across their Department/School/Institute/Faculty and to decide whether each nomination is supported by them or not.

The review process provides the Head/Director/FDO with the opportunity to provide appropriate comment on the nomination, including:

- The quality of the evidence provided
- The outcomes of contribution / performance discussions during the year
- Priorities and constraints within the team which may be relevant to the nomination.

The Head of School, Institute Director, Professional Services Director or FDO should discuss these comments with the line manager, if the nomination is not being supported.

If the nomination is not supported and the potential recipient has become aware that a nomination was being submitted, the reasons for non-support must be explained to the individual in a meeting by the line manager or the decision-maker on the nomination (i.e. Head of School, Institute Director, PS Director or FDO). The faculty/departmental ER Manager or Strategic HR Business Partner will be able to provide guidance and support to line managers/Heads/Directors in conducting these meetings. There is no right of appeal; the purpose of this meeting, which is informal, is simply to provide feedback and explanation to the individual who was nominated.

In order for us to monitor and further develop this scheme, including our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, Heads/Directors should review all nominations and send their decisions and rationale (including the PS buddying outcomes) via the process that will be communicated to them, to the Reward and Benefits team (rewardandbenefits@qmul.ac.uk) by Friday 22 May 2026.

5. Panels

Once the closing date for the receipt of all nominations has passed, all nominations will be reviewed and considered by the relevant panel, as outlined below. Each panel's decisions will be made based solely on the evidence provided in the nomination.

In each of the academic faculties, a Faculty Panel will be scheduled during June 2026, chaired by the Faculty Vice-Principal to consider nominations for academic/research staff, and would normally include:

- Heads of School / Directors of Institute
- Faculty Deans
- Faculty Lead for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Heads of School/Directors of Institute will be invited to present nominations from their School/Institute to the panel. The Faculty Strategic HR Partner will attend in an advisory capacity.

For staff on Professional Services and Technical Terms and Conditions, there will have been a review process involving members of the Professional Services Leadership Team (PSLT) prior to the deadline of Friday 22 May 2026. This entails 'buddying' members of the PSLT with one another to review nominations across operational areas, with a view to calibrating decision-making across Professional Services. This will be followed in June 2026 by an overall Professional Services Review Panel which will conduct an overview of all Professional Services nominations. The Review Panel will include:

- Chief Operations Officer (Chair)
- Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary
- Chief Financial Officer
- Human Resources Director
- An Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager

After the Faculty and Professional Services Panels have met, there will be an overall University Calibration process in early July 2026, which will be led by a Vice-Principal who has not been involved in the Panels. The purpose is to conduct a review of the decisions/outcomes and an Equality Impact Assessment. The calibration process will also identify any lessons learned to guide and inform any changes to the next Staff Bonus round.

The Chairs of all panels will ensure:

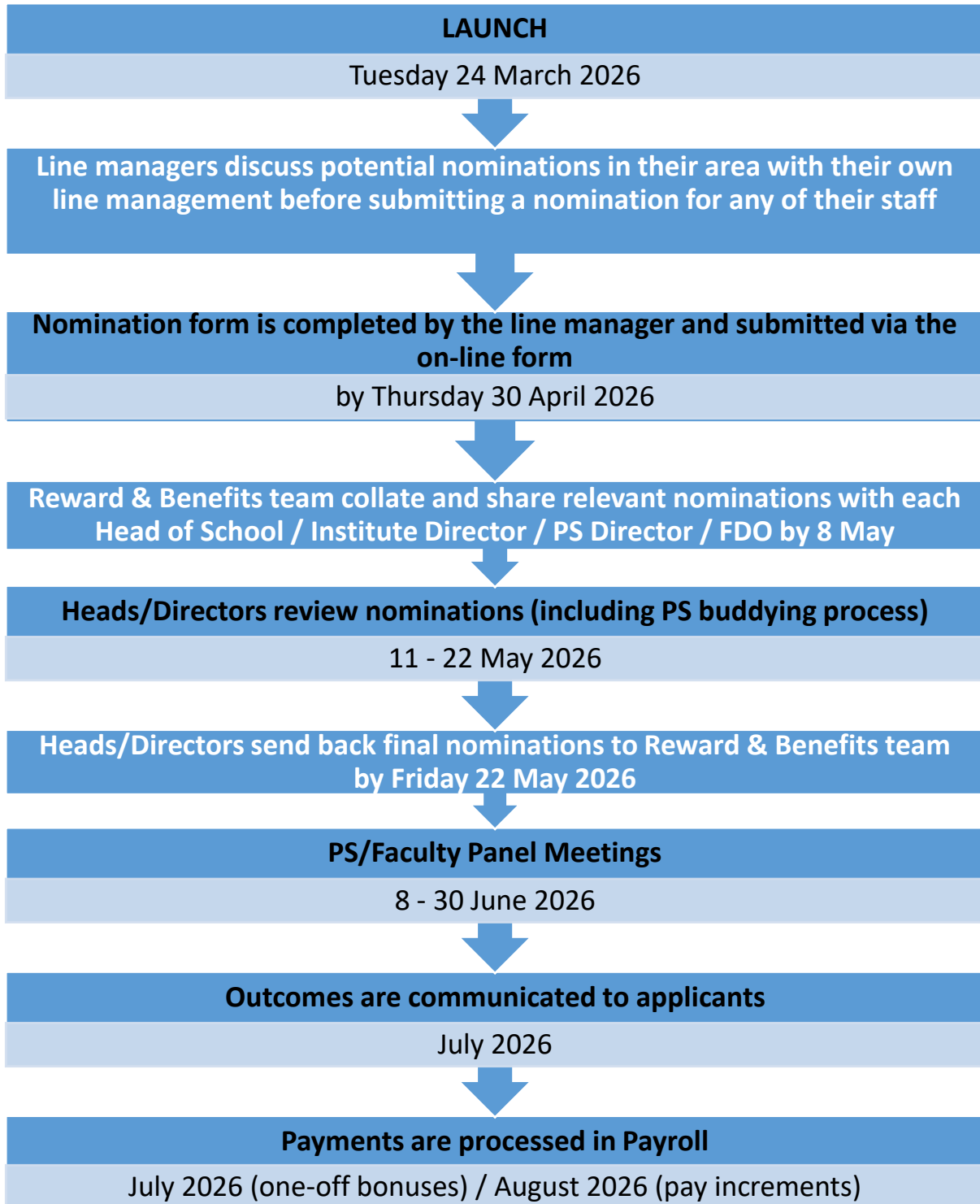
- ✓ all nominations are given due consideration
- ✓ confidentiality is maintained
- ✓ integrity in the decision-making process by following due process
- ✓ the Panel's decisions regarding whether nominations meet the criteria are evidence-based, and are consistent, fair and transparent.

The Head of Reward and Benefits may attend panel meetings to provide advice and to help ensure consistency of approach. The Reward and Benefits Administrator will attend panel meetings to record the decisions.

6. Notification of decisions

The Reward and Benefits team will first confirm Panel outcomes in writing to Heads/Directors, who in turn will need to provide verbal feedback to line managers on both successful and unsuccessful nominations. The Reward and Benefits team will then prepare and issue letters to the successful recipients of bonuses and pay increases, confirming the Panels' decisions. Heads/Directors are solely responsible for providing feedback on unsupported nominations and confirming this in writing as applicable.

7. Timetable



8. Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the scheme exist?

As part of the total reward package, Queen Mary has an annual staff bonus scheme to reward those who have significantly exceeded expectations in the contributions they have made to Queen Mary during the past year, in line with the University Values.

Who can nominate?

The line manager of the employee can submit a nomination. The scheme is available to Queen Mary employees in grades 1-8 and equivalent clinical grades with at least 6 months' service (as at Tuesday 31 March 2026), provided they have no unexpired formal warnings on their file for either conduct or capability.

How many nominations am I able to submit for a member of my team?

You can only submit one nomination for each individual – either a one-off bonus nomination **or** a pay increment nomination, but not both.

A pay increment nomination may only be made for a Professional/Technical/Research member of staff in grades 1-7 who is no longer eligible for automatic pay increments.

When do I need to complete the nomination by?

The online nomination form needs to be completed by the line manager by Thursday 30 April 2026.

Who makes the decisions?

Decisions on supported nominations will be made at the relevant panel meeting (with an additional step of a buddy review in PS). Where there is no consensus amongst the Panel, the Chair of the Panel will make the final decision.

After the Faculty and Professional Services Panels have met, there will be an overall calibration process, to conduct an overall review of all decisions and an Equalities Impact Assessment.

How and when will bonuses be paid or incremental increases applied?

Successful applicants will receive an award in the form of a one-off bonus payment or a pay increment. Payment is planned to be made in July 2026 (for one off bonuses) or in August 2026 (for pay increments), provided all panels have met and the calibration process has been concluded in time.

What constitutes exceptional performance and how do I evidence it?

Exceptional performance must be evidenced against the criteria set out in section 3 of the guidelines. The nomination should also include how the contribution has been delivered in line with University Values, not just what has been delivered. Please click on this link for further details on the [Values in action](#).

How much bonus will I get if I am successfully nominated for one?

There will be one level of bonus for those successful in getting an individual bonus award. The exact bonus payment amount will be determined once all bonus nominations have been considered by the panels using the criteria.

I am a line manager – what is my role in the process?

Complete, sign-off and forward all nominations to your Head/Director/School Manager by Thursday 30 April 2026. Provide feedback to staff who may have approached you about a nomination, but where you consider that they do not meet the criteria.

After the nominations have been considered you may be asked to provide feedback to individuals as requested by your Head/Director/School Manager.

I am a Departmental/School/Institute Head/Director – what is my role in the process?

Your role is to facilitate the process from launch date to when nominations are submitted to HR. You can do this by cascading information in your department and communicating the nomination deadline to your line managers. You should work with your line managers to ensure all online forms, whether they are supported by you or not, have been completed and submitted via the online process by Thursday 30 April 2026.

Where nominations are not supported by you, once you have reviewed all nominations, please provide constructive feedback to the line manager.