

New Staffing Structures for the ANU?

A discussion paper

Background

This report proposes new academic and general staffing career structures following from the 2007 Vice-Chancellor's Retreat, at which preliminary consideration was given to whether there are structures and remuneration mechanisms that recognise and reward the contributions staff make in a manner better than at present.

The structures presented here have benefitted from the deliberations of two working parties and five staff forums, along with presentations to two meetings of the Academic Board and to the Vice-Chancellor's planning retreat in February 2008.

Principles of Any New Approach

Any new arrangements should:

- be an improvement on current structures and remuneration processes
- recognise and reward contribution, and not just time in position
- be supported with more effective performance assessment practices
- be easily recognised against existing academic models
- be as simple as possible and not increase the administrative burden on staff
- be sufficiently flexible to account for differences in roles and disciplines.

An Academic Staff Model

Several options for academic staffing that might suit the University well and would facilitate the introduction of a remuneration scheme based on a combination of effort and quality have been considered over the past 12 months. They included a two-layer (lecturer/professor) model and several variants of the three-layer North American structure. Following most recent discussions, the three level structure shown in Figure 1 is now proposed for staff consideration and feedback.

First, we effectively abolish the current Level A; instead, the entry point for the new lower level starts at the current A6 step. There is now flexibility to introduce a number of innovative entry pathways into an academic career, one of which might be a scheme that offers highly performing senior graduate students a contract for academic employment prior to submission.

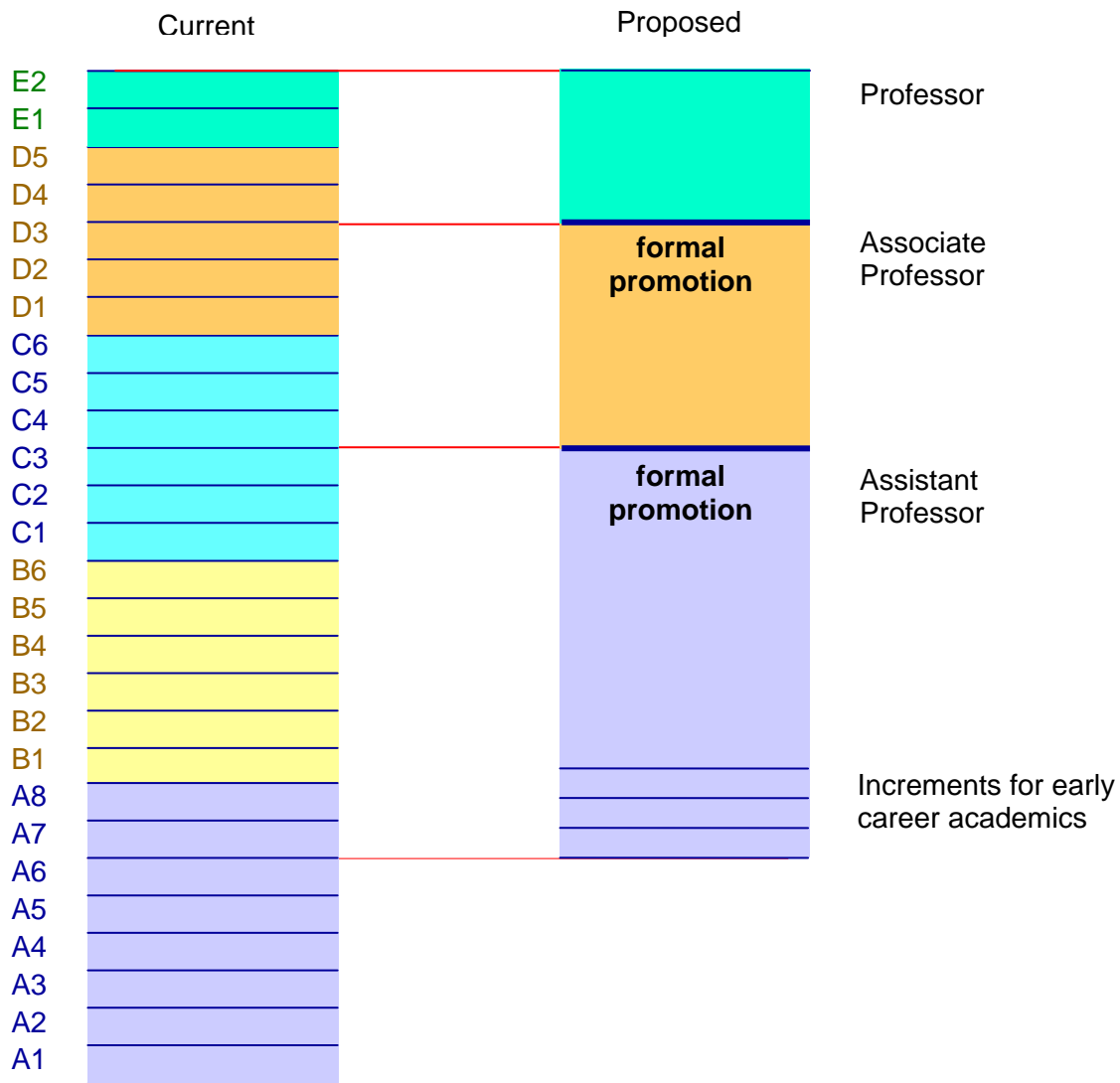
We propose that the titles of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor be adopted since they were favoured at the recent Retreat. While there has been some concern that the grade of Assistant Professor might be seen as "assistant" to the Professor, and that the use of Lecturer might be preferable, it seems that nomenclature that is as consistent as possible with that used in North America would create less confusion for the University. The US style of structure and nomenclature is also being adopted in several Asian countries and particularly in partners like NUS. In this model there would be formal promotion decisions between Assistant and Associate Professor and Associate Professor and Professor. The nexus between tenure and the first promotion would not be carried over from the North American scheme since the concept of tenure as such no longer applies in the Australian system.

Figure1 show that the Assistant Professor grade will cover a very large number of steps, from the current A6 through to about the current C3. There may be value in adding a soft barrier in that range that would then allow some concept of seniority to be imbedded, although

terminology would then need re-consideration. If the bottom level were named Lecturer then the grade of Senior Lecturer could then be revisited.

Table 1 presents a comparison of this structure against the present as a basis for further examination.

Figure 1. A three level model for academic staffing



The new remuneration model described below largely removes the need for a detailed incremental structure. It is recommended that there be no increments in the senior levels and that salaries be set according to the proposed remuneration model. In principle, there would also be little need for many increments in the junior levels. However, it is considered that increments could be necessary at the early career entry level in order that a person be given time to establish their reputation and demonstrate their skills while still being able to progress in salary. Accordingly, it is suggested that four increment levels of six months each be included.

Changing to a new structure will require well-informed and timely decisions by supervisors in respect of remuneration, progression and promotion. Remuneration decisions must also be objective and verifiable, so that an individual's strength of argument does not replace actual assessed contribution and quality as the basis for decision-making. This is important to ensure that those who are less comfortable/skilled with direct negotiation are not disadvantaged.

Table 1 Attribute comparison of the current and proposed academic staffing models

Current Structure	Proposed Structure
more regulated	fewer barriers
4 promotion points	fewer promotion points
level A unattractive?	flexible entry paths
understood	needs selling
ANU policy control	more College control
well defined level C	level C needs definition
no USA counterpart	lowers full professorial level
many increments	

Supervisor competency will be essential and there is a need to train and support supervisors in making these assessments. Also, appointment procedures for supervisors at the level of Head of Department need to be examined. In the early 1990s the University moved from an election to an appointment process for Deans of (then) Faculties. That has led to a significant improvement in Faculty management and decision-making. The time may be right to consider, likewise, similar procedures for Heads of Departments and their length of office. Department Heads, currently, can be in position for fewer than three years, which is not appropriate when significant career progression decisions need to be made.

As with all significant changes, some transitional issues will have to be addressed in moving to this type of structure. One is related to those staff recently promoted to level C who would now find themselves back in the lower level. One way of obviating that problem would be to maintain the senior lecturer grade for a short period, until those people could present themselves for promotion to the new Associate Professor grade. Staff opinion on this, or alternative remedies, would be valued. A similar situation exists for level E2 professors, but perhaps apart possibly from salary maintenance, such a situation is a necessary consequence of the move to the new structure. Again, opinions from staff would be valued.

Another area requiring careful consideration relates to superannuation, especially for those staff on defined benefits schemes; given that salary could conceivably drop with a drop in individual contribution to College effort, there may be consequential impacts on superannuation that need examination.

Remuneration Model for Academic Staff

The basis for a remuneration model has been devised that recognises that a staff member's salary should be set initially at their current base level, being the level of the last promotion or increment, and then adjusted upwards from that base according to:

- the contribution that they make to the work of their College, University and the wider community, including
 - their research, teaching and other duties
 - specific responsibilities, such as Head of Department, Associate Dean and similar
- their marketability.

The market component would apply to a small number of staff in the University and is aimed at attracting and retaining top academics in the face of salary driven external competition. The

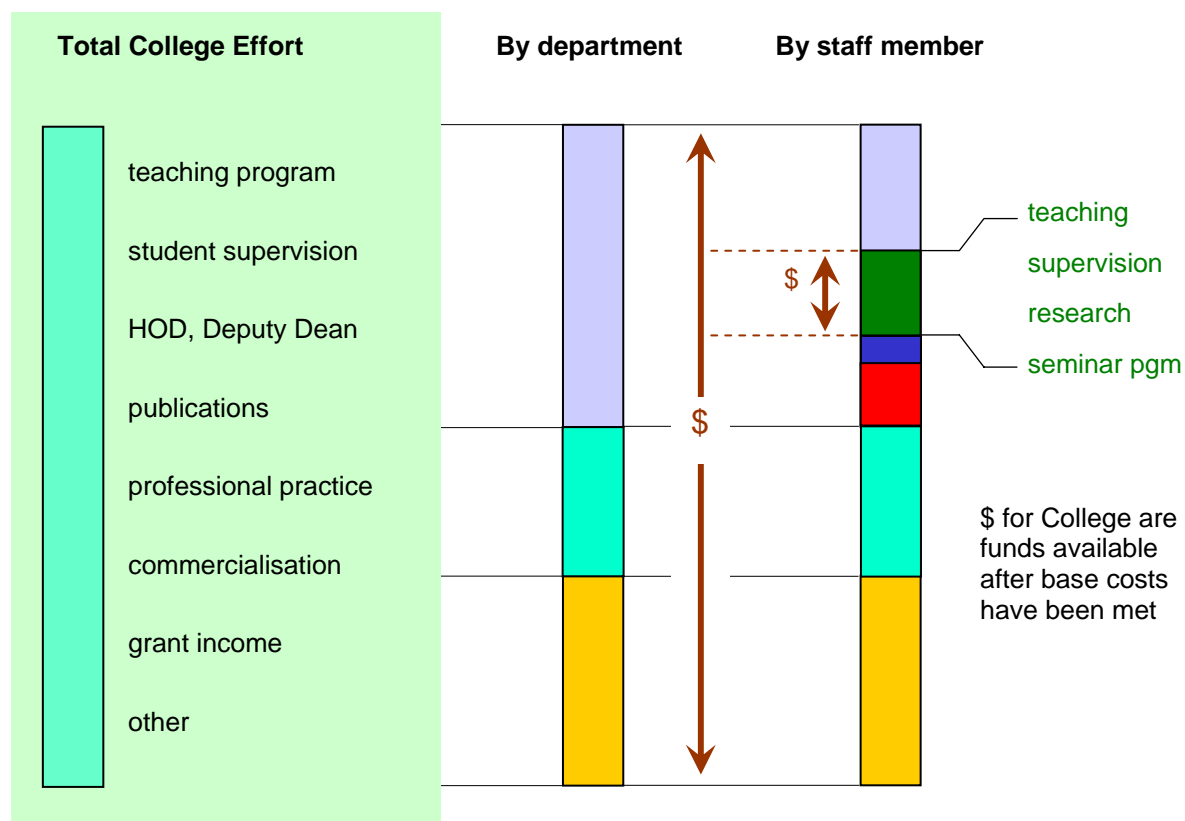
salary values of that component would be set, as at present, according to University policy. Similarly, the salary value of the component for specific responsibilities would be set by University policy, as at present.

A staff member, who elects only to put in the base contribution that is established for the bottom of each level, effectively elects to remain on the base of that level. Those who contribute at a higher level will be rewarded by way of a salary that might even exceed the base level for the next grade.

Apart from responsibility loadings, the contribution component would be based upon a workload/contributions model that might be different for each College, or components of a College, recognising the differing cultures of contribution to the research, education and service.

The staff member’s remuneration above their current base would be set by the proportion of the total contribution that staff member undertakes for his or her department from the total funds available after fixed costs have been met. Figure 2 illustrates how that would devolve from the responsibilities of a College for delivering prescribed activities. That should not be a difficult idea to develop, particularly if the contribution values are set in a number of discrete steps rather than as a continuum.

Figure 2. Basis of the contributions component of the remuneration model after marketability and responsibility allowances have been accounted for



The model should also recognise less quantitative factors such as the esteem that some outstanding staff members bring to the University. Community contributions at a local, national and international level could, in principle, be recognised as part of the total contribution the University is expected to make. Table 2 compares features of the current method of setting academic salaries, compared to the proposed remuneration model.

The potential exist with this model to place a weighted “contribution value” on those activities that the University wishes to encourage. They can be assessed and incorporated into the career performance and expectation statements for the staff member.

Once a staff member has reached one of the grades indicated in Figure 1 their base remuneration would not expect to fall unless subject to disciplinary or under performance procedures.

Table 2. Comparison of the current and proposed salary setting methods

Current Arrangements	Proposed Model
regular expectation	contributions based
not linked to effort	directly linked to effort
easy to apply	requires judgement?
currently annual	not necessarily annual
less budget control	control of salary budget

A general staff model

Career streams and broad banding

The first step in providing potential better career and remuneration prospects for general staff is to collapse the current fourteen career streams shown in Figure 3 into a smaller number, possibly as low as four, thereby minimising partitions that constrain flexibility in career development. The new streams could be identified by titles that recognise broad functional roles, such as:

- research and education technical services
incorporating technical, research, drafting and illustrating staff
- academic, student and corporate services
incorporating administrative and stores staff, research office, engineering and printing staff
- Information services
incorporating IT and Library staff
- operational services
incorporating hospitality and security staff, trades, maintenance and cleaning staff, and general services and grounds staff

Figure 3. The current 14 general staff streams, with ongoing FTE in each stream and at each level (December 2007)

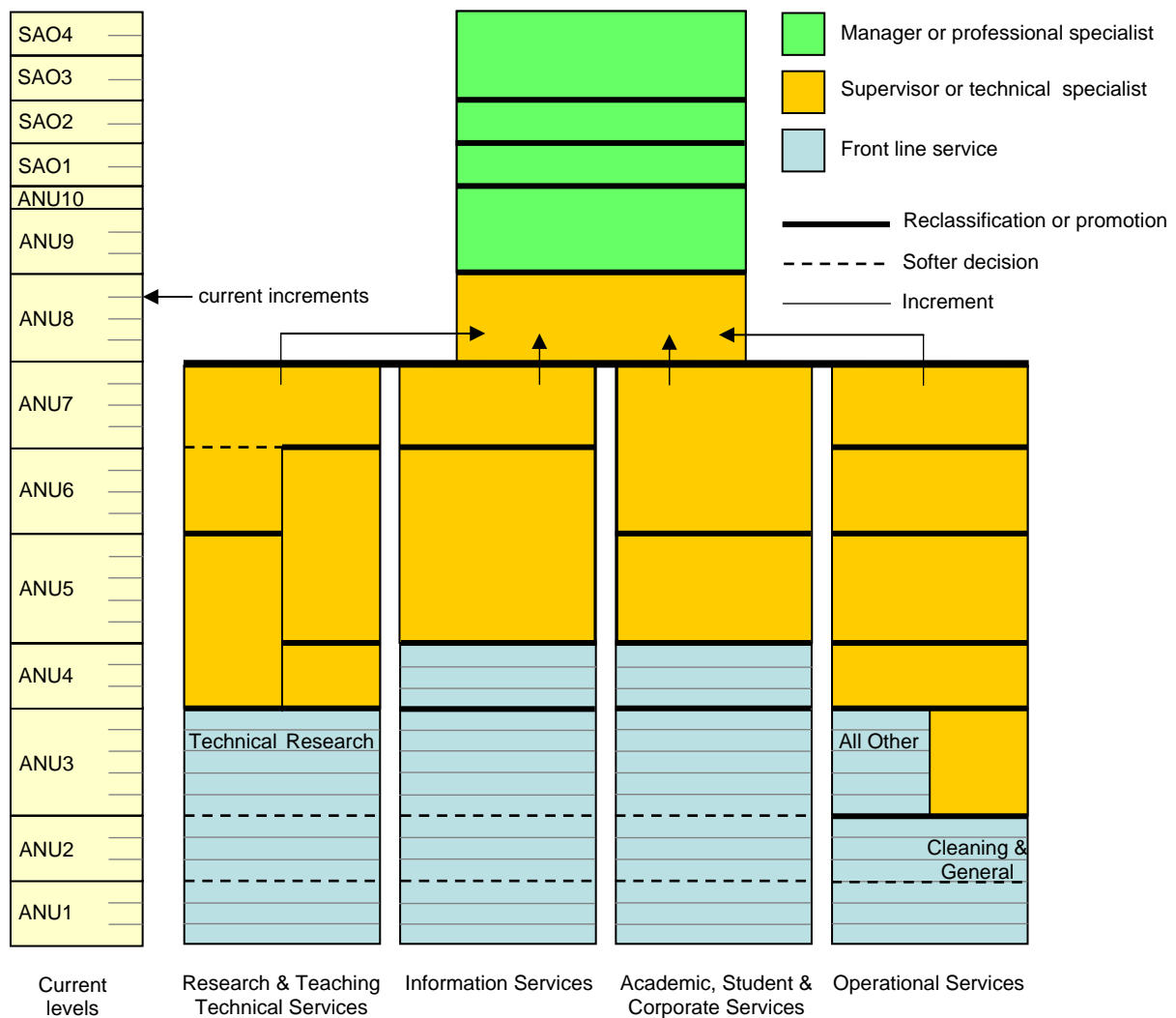
Levels														Total	
SAO 4	1													1	
SAO 3	9													9	
SAO 2	28													28	
SAO 1	37													37	
10	86	7			9	4								106	
9	28	38		10	9	4								89	
8	165	59	5	18	41	9								297	
7	182	39	3	26	70	1	2							323	
6	129	43	12	69	103	4	3							363	
5	270	19		33	104	2		1	9	4				442	
4	210	8	7	4	15			1	15	3	10			273	
3	106				66			3	25	14	5	20	1	240	
2	28				7			1	1			20	5	62	
1	2				1							2		7	
	Admin	IT	Library	Research	Technical	Engineer	Drafting	Stores	Maint / Trades	Security	Grounds	Hospitality	General services	Cleaning	2277

Each stream can be partitioned vertically into recognisable **career levels** that might be called:

1. **front line service**
2. **supervisor and/or technical specialist** (to indicate those staff with supervisor responsibilities and/or to recognise specialist technical expertise)
3. **manager and/or professional specialist** (to indicate those staff with higher managerial responsibilities and/or to recognise professional specialists in the University)

Once a staff member operates at supervisor or management status they could potentially work over all four streams and thereby have available a formally recognised career path that is not currently available. Figure 4 summarises these arrangements showing explicitly that beyond the current ANU7 there is no need to maintain separate general staffing streams.

Figure 4. Proposed general staff model showing the opportunity to work across streams as capabilities are developed.



Remuneration Model and Salary Progression for General Staff

In a similar way to that proposed for academic staff a model for general staff remuneration should be devised based on work value and the additional capabilities required for a staff member to progress *within* a given salary band – i.e. between the reclassification or promotion points shown in Figure 4. This would replace most time-based increments.

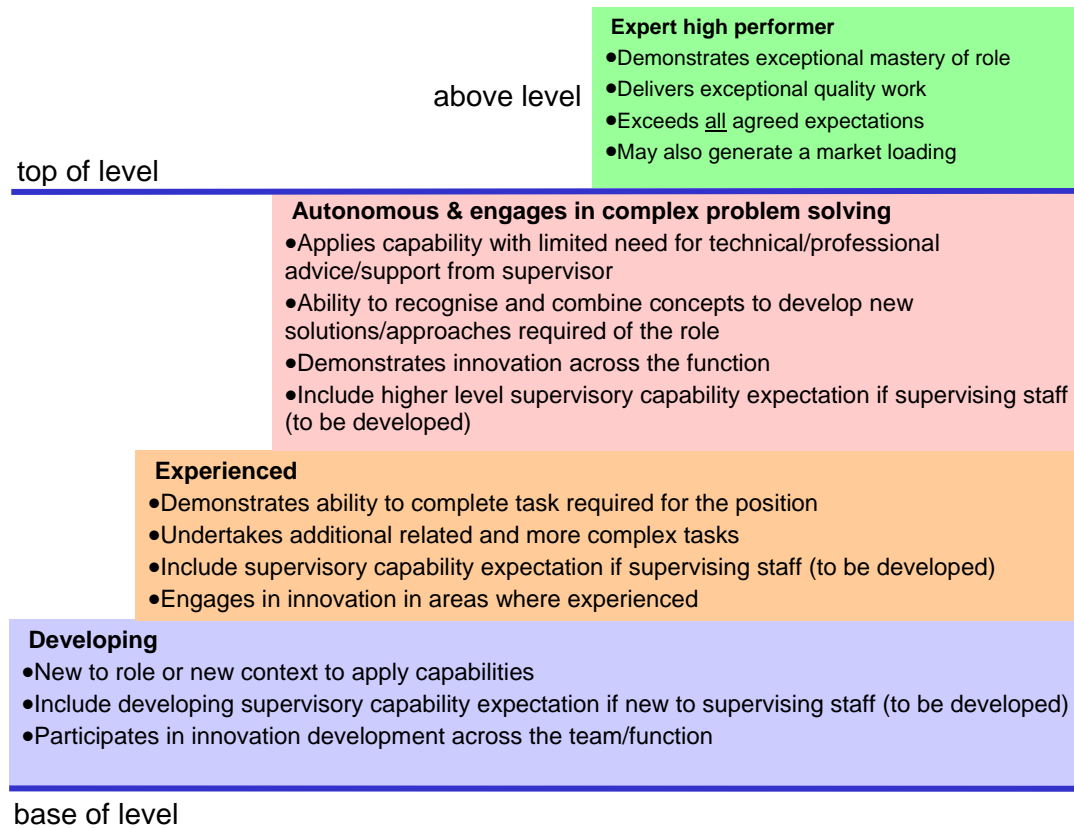
The assessment process for setting remuneration should be based on broad capability criteria using development phases that could be called:

- Developing
- Experienced
- Autonomous – Complex Problem Solving
- Expert high performer

These suggested capabilities, detailed in Figure 5, aim to guide the supervisor in assessing if the staff member has increased their capability and contribution using broad criteria that track

the type of development that should be expected of someone within each level. The salary progression points are not time based and it is conceivable that someone could move from the lower point through to the highest over one performance cycle (1 year).

Figure 5. Basis for the general staff remuneration scheme



These criteria need to be refined and agreed but should remain broad so they retain the capacity to be applied at the individual workplace level, particularly to reflect differences in trade, technical or administrative roles. In this way (similar to the approach with Academic Activity Profiles) they can be given greater meaning in the context of the positions to which they apply.

Three progression points would be set in each band (current there are 3-5 increments in each level), with an additional progression point that could take the staff member to a salary above the base of the next level (say, up to the point of current second increment). Granting such a level would be reserved for exceptional high performers who demonstrate quality work against all agreed expectations. Continued contribution at this level may be an indicator that the position requirement may need to be reviewed through the University reclassification process. Alternatively, it may recognise the staff member's individual contribution is above their current level but not sufficient to warrant reclassification of the position itself.

Advancement within bands under this proposal might be termed *salary progression* to differentiate it from the annual increments staff are currently used.

Table 4 provides a comparison of this proposal against the current structure.

Table 4. Comparison of the new general staffing model with current arrangements

Current Structure	Proposed Arrangements
16 streams	4 streams
43 increments	greater incremental differentiation
less dependence on supervisor skills	good supervisor skills essential
less access to senior levels	improved access to senior levels
career progression limited	better career progression prospects
“automatic” salary adjustments	requires a College salary review process

Increments

Increments should be retained at the lower end of the general staff structure. Staff undertaking those roles become faster, more accurate and thus contribute more over time. Time based increments therefore appear to be an appropriate method for recognising the additional contributions made.

In addition, it may be some time before lower level supervising staff have the ability to make the judgements required to assess contribution based on the proposed approach. We could consider replacing annual increments at the lower levels in the future as the skills of these supervisors have developed and we gain experience using a contribution-based model at the higher levels.

Merit and Market Loadings

This remuneration model would subsume all current performance payments and loadings but in order to retain the ability to match market salaries in certain occupations, market loadings may continued to be offered in addition to the assessed progression point where warranted.