

RCM Career framework

What is a Professor?

A professor is an academic of the highest rank. They often hold a university chair, i.e. a professorship named after a founder or donor of the university in order to commemorate them.

A professor of midwifery is seen as an expert in their field and frequently combines research and research leadership with continued clinical practice and clinical development. They are strategic leaders and managers for research and teaching within the university. Professors act locally, nationally and internationally as inspirational researchers and disseminators of research. As role models for the profession they impact on the research, practice and its evidence base.

Some universities work with a three tier system known as the New Academic Career structure in order to improve recruitment, mentoring, review and pay of academic careers. These include:

- Assistant Professor,
- Associate Professor and
- Full Professor.

These replace the previous structure of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor.

How do I become one?

You will need to hold a good first degree and a master's degree in a relevant field to move on to taking a PhD (either traditional or professional). A PhD (doctorate) is the highest academic degree awarded by universities in most countries. Doctoral study requires you to demonstrate your expertise and mastery in a subject by examination that contributes additional or unique knowledge to an area of knowledge as a result of research.

Career advancement towards professorship positions is strongly influenced by scholarly activity internally and externally to the university, for example, developing a strong skills portfolio by participating and leading in research, either within the university and or clinical practice, leading seminars, tutorials, lecturing/teaching and publishing. Involvement in curriculum design as well as your publication record and teaching experience are all critical when working towards a professorship.

If you are an academic within a university there are three ways to be promoted:

- application for a vacant position
- nomination by heads of department
- application under the university's internal career advancement system



Promoting · Supporting · Influencing

In order to progress your career you will need experience in practice, teaching, scholarly activity and research. Professorships are not normally awarded unless you have extensive teaching, publication and research records that contribute to the Research Excellence Framework (REF). REF assesses the excellence of research in higher education institutions, improves the research ranking of a university and therefore its reputation, ultimately attracting research funding to the university.

What else can I do?

If you are an assistant / associate professor you can work towards becoming a professor by increasing your research and scholarly activity such as bidding for research grants, undertaking research, publishing and presenting at conferences nationally and internationally. Increase your management and leadership skills and responsibilities in curriculum design and become more involved in wider faculty/university activities and key external interest groups and committees.

Universities are very like any corporate institution and as you work towards becoming a professor you develop many transferable skills that can lead to senior university positions such as Head of School, Dean of Faculty, Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor or Pro-Vice Chancellor depending on the university's structure.

A professorship also can take you to environments external to academia, for example, working with the government in the Department of Health.