

# Academic Promotion in Malaysia: Meeting academics' expectation and institutional needs

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## Background

Malaysia adopts uniform nomenclature for academic ranks; from lecturer (DS45) to senior lecturer/assistant lecturer (DS51/52) to associate professor (DS53/54) and to professor (VK7). However, there are three levels of professorship, starting with level VK7, VK6 and only a selected few eventually make it to level VK5. The academic career structure for academics in public universities is in line with the general structure of the Malaysian civil service. Thus, the remuneration system is the same across all twenty public institutions. Similar to other civil servants, it is a permanent post which ends with mandatory retirement at the age of sixty. The academic profession is one of the few professions where one is given the option to continue serving after retirement but on a contract basis. However, the basis for continuation is based on performance and one may only be appointed on a contract basis up to the age of sixty-five.

Malaysian public higher education institutions are distinctly categorized as research, comprehensive, and focused. The focused universities have a specific focus; which are technical, education, management, and defense

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universities and the concentration is on specific fields related to their establishments. Comprehensive universities are referred to as comprehensive because they offer many different fields of study. The research universities may also offer many fields of study but they have been accorded the status of research universities following a thorough audit process. The Malaysian Research Assessment (MyRA) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013) instrument is used to assess the research performance of research related activities. Among the criteria assessed in MyRA is quantity and quality of researchers; research and postgraduate; innovation and intellectual property; and income generation activities (Azman, Pang, Sirat & MdYunus, 2014). To date, there are twenty public universities comprising of five research universities (RU), four comprehensive universities, and eleven focused universities.

The roles, status and job expectations especially for those academics in RU defer significantly to the other categories of institutions. To maintain RU status, the targets to be achieved are cascaded down to the academics based on the targets set by MyRA. Meeting higher standards also implies a more stringent requirement for promotion. The key performance indicators (KPI) assigned to each academic in an RU is also more demanding. However, the high demand asserted by the institution is not compensated with a better remuneration system. In other words, an associate professor or professor in RU has to settle with the same pay scheme as others in non-RU institutions amidst their higher job expectations.

In highlighting the work demand of academics in RU, it does not imply that those in non-RU institutions are more relaxed and have lesser pressure because all universities are now concentrating more on research and working towards achieving research university status. Nevertheless, the work demand in RU is generally more challenging and demanding and criteria for promotion is very strict. Promotion is based on a merit system, and each university is allowed to establish its own criteria based on a guideline drawn by the Ministry of Higher Education (2012) (now known as Ministry of Education). Each university sets its promotion criteria which are aimed at encouraging, developing and maintaining quality academics as well as attracting the highest quality faculty.

Che Omar, MdYunus, Azman, and Mohd Zain (2014) has summarized on the criteria and indicators used for promotion adopted by Malaysian public universities:

- *Teaching and learning*

Number of courses taught, number of credits for the courses, number of students per course, academic advisory, other academic workloads, undergraduate student supervisory and curriculum, teaching and learning and innovation in delivery systems.

- *Post graduate supervision*

Number of students supervised, numbers graduated, roles of supervisor (either as the main supervisor, as co-supervisor or member in supervisory panel)

- *Research and innovation*

Number of research grants (national or international grants), magnitude and scale of the research projects, involvement as lead investigator or co-researcher, source of funding, research impact, patents, IPs, technology transfer and commercialization.

- *Publication and writing*

Publication includes articles in reputable journals, monographs, chapter in books, books and proceedings. Reputable and quality refer to indexed journal, ISI, SCOPUS and journals with high Impact Factor (IF).

- *Academic recognition*

Degree or the level of respect received by an academic from his/her academic fraternity, examiners of theses, evaluation panels for research grants application, reviewer of manuscripts, journal articles and papers, promotion exercise, plenary, invited or keynote presentations at conferences, external examiners, awards (teaching and research awards, and other awards based on academic and research excellent), visiting professor, editors of index journals and books, academic committees, and advisory panels/committee members for government/non-government agencies and industries related to his/her expertise.

- *Community services and nation building*

Voluntary services, community development programs and community transformation activities. Academic participation in the

government bodies as think tanks and committee members at the ministerial level for national interest will be considered as part of the contribution in nation building.

- *Consultancy and industrial linkages*

Consultancy can be in many forms, with or without monetary rewards which is provided to the government and non-government agencies or industries. Evaluated based on the quality of the consultancy work and the financial implication involved in the work. Industrial linkages created with the industries may also involve consultancy work which includes contract research, contract services or advisory and expert panel, either at the national or international level. Industrial linkages will cover the scope of industrial attachment, advisory panel, research collaborators, technology transfer and commercialization through joint venture for the establishment of companies.

- *Administrative roles/contributions to university*

Contribution to the university refers to the involvement and participation in developing the university and responsible to bringing the institution to the next level, measured based on the posts held or as the team member in the university leadership and management such as Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Director, Dean, Head of Department or Head of Program.

## **Problem statement**

Assessment for promotion is largely based on the above criteria, and the promotion process is complex with differing weighting on each criteria and differing weighting across academic ranks and types of universities. In keeping abreast of the demand of maintaining the RU status, the 'research and teaching dilemma' seems more evident especially when promotion is attached more to research than teaching, thus causing intense competition for rewards, recognition, and promotion. In RUs, the use of assessment for academic scholarship using measures such as impact factor and h-index is becoming a culture (Azman, Pang, Sirat & MdYunus, 2014). In addition, Azman, Sirat

and Dahlan (2012) emphasized that the existing scholarship on academic work and reward structure focuses on which mission is most rewarded.

With such criteria, academics are faced with conflicting demands between the university's projection and the academic's personal motivation for promotion and passion for the profession. The KPIs drawn by some RUs seem almost impossible to achieve. As pointed out by Azman, Pang, Sirat, and MdYunus (2014), University of Malaya, one of Malaysia's leading RUs, set the standard academic performance target and new promotion criteria by benchmarking against global research universities in Asia as well as other regions. The stringent promotion process has caused glaring movement of academics from universities especially RUs to non-RU universities. Although no concrete data has shown the extent of 'brain circulation' within Malaysian universities, the mass media has made several controversial statements regarding this matter.

The Star Online in the May 20, 2014 edition exposed the large number of medical lecturers quitting from public universities, with Universiti Sains Malaysia losing thirty-eight lecturers in the last six months and University of Malaya twenty-one clinical lecturers in 2013. However, the case with medical lecturers is quite universal since these specialists are well sought out by private hospitals. Malay Mail online in the December 3, 2013 issue reported that one of Malaysia's RU is losing academic staff in several key courses owing to unhappiness over allegedly slow career progression, citing a critic saying that "the university had problems retaining the best of the talents it has, let alone attracting them". In response to these comments, the university's representative mentioned that "attracting and retaining talent is a challenge for any institution", because academics leave for various reasons, including the seeking "new experience in new environment" and that "In the higher education scene in Malaysia there is always movement of staff from one higher education institute to another for various reasons. At the moment such movements are manageable". Several factors contribute to the migration to another university. Firstly, the expertise and experience of a reputable academic may be sought by another institution to hold various significant positions such as vice chancellor, deputy vice chancellor and professors. Secondly, the migration may be due to dissatisfaction in getting a promotion. In other words, they are looking for greener pastures. Thirdly, one may move because the spouses are stationed far from the institution that they are servicing. Thus they choose to move closer to be with the family. Many young academics move out early in their career to join another institution, while good

professors move out especially after retirement.

In Malaysia, criteria and processes for promotion or even confirmation vary greatly between public universities. However, the use of one remuneration scheme with a common grade and salary system across all public universities may be considered unfair by some academics. It is not commensurate with their effort. Academics tend to seek for better pay and lesser KPI. Thus, one may transfer to another university, deemed easier in getting promotion, to get better opportunities for promotion if they are no longer bounded by contract for study/sabbatical leave.

## **Objectives of the paper**

The objectives of this paper are:

1. To identify the gap between what academics expect to be emphasized and what is actually assessed in promotion.
2. To determine if there is a difference in job mobility according to:
  - a. Expectation of emphasis to be assessed in each of the four aspects of academic positions
  - b. Actual assessment emphasis in each of the four aspects of academic positions
3. To determine if there is difference in job satisfaction according to:
  - a. Expectation of emphasis to be assessed in each of the four aspects of academic positions
  - b. Actual assessment emphasis in each of the four aspects of academic positions
4. To identify the important considerations for staying or leaving an institution.

## **Research methodology**

The Academic Profession in Asia (APA) project, initiated by Hiroshima University, is the Asian version of the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) project (2007). It began with the Hiroshima International Workshop on July 17-18, 2011 to establish the methodology and survey which was attended by members representing eight Asian countries. The survey was further refined through discussions via email. To allow comparisons with CAP (2007), the format of the APA survey differs little from CAP.

Each country was given the freedom to make minor changes to the survey so that the items are relevant in the context of their higher education in their

countries. However, to allow across country comparisons, the format of the original questionnaire was maintained. It was agreed by all members that in order to minimize measurement bias across countries, country teams maintained a high level of standardization in terms of question order; question wording; response options; reference periods; and layout and formal design. It was also reinforced that cultural patterns and language specifics might require functional rather than formal equivalents and country teams could design national extensions to the questionnaire.

The target was to get at least 800 respondents from each of the participating countries. In Malaysia, the questionnaire was sent to all twenty public institutions and extra care was taken to ensure a fair representation of respondents across academic ranks and disciplines. Responses were received from eighteen universities (90%). From the earlier studies involving academics, it was anticipated that the response rate would be very low, thus 3000 questionnaires were hand delivered or posted to enumerators appointed in each institution. They were briefed by personal interaction or telephone call on methods in selecting samples to ensure a true reflection of the changing academic profession in Malaysia. Several reminders were made before the team decided to end the data collection as the number of respondents met the target of 800. However, after the data cleaning process, a few responses had to be excluded.

## **Findings and discussions**

### ***The profile of the respondents***

The survey was administered to 660 respondents among academics in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the distribution according to academic rank of 651 academics who responded to this item. The distribution reflects the typical ‘bottom-heavy’ profile of the academic profession in general worldwide.

Table 2 summarizes the background of the respondents according to familial status; employment status of partner; whether the partner was an academic; and number of children. It can be seen that the majority (85.9%) of respondents were married, about three quarters (75.3%) of them had children, with about a third (35.5%) having three or more children. Notably, 43.2% of them were married to a spouse who was also in the same profession.

**Table 1. Distribution according to academic rank**

Academic rank	Frequency	Percent
Professor	93	14.3
Associate professor	133	20.4
Lecturer	406	62.4
Other (associate, instructor, tutor etc.)	19	2.9
Total	651	100.0

**Table 2. Respondents' family background**

Variable	Frequency	Percent	
Family status	Married/partner	555	85.9
	Single	89	13.8
	Other	2	0.3
	Total	646	100
Employment of partner	Yes, full-time	406	69.0
	Yes, part-time	25	4.3
	No	157	26.7
	Total	588	100.0
Academic partner	Yes	253	43.2
	No	333	56.8
	Total	586	100.0
Children	Yes, 1 child	115	18.6
	Yes, 2 children	131	21.2
	Yes, 3 or more children	220	35.5
	No	153	24.7
	Total	619	100.0

**Gap between expectation and actual assessment for promotion**

Table 3 compares the responses between the expected and actual emphasis on assessment for promotion based on the four core functions of the academics: research, teaching, administration and management, and social services. In both assessment expectation and reality, research is the most emphasized, followed by teaching; administration and management; and lastly social services. In reality, research (-10.4%); teaching (-10.9%); and social services (-9.3%) are less assessed compared to expectation, and administration (+1.2%) is assessed slightly more than expected.

Table 4 shows the cross-tabulations of expected emphasis on each of the core functions for assessment against mobility measured by the number of higher education institutions employed since first degree. The results show that there is no association between job mobility and those who expect and those who do not expect research to be emphasized in performance assessment. The same trend is observed for expectation in assessment in other core functions. These imply that the expectation in assessment emphasis in all aspects (research; teaching; administration and management; and social services) and job mobility are not related.

**Table 3. Gap between expectation and actual assessment for promotion**

Variables	Expectation		Reality		Gap
	Not Emphasized	Emphasized	Not Emphasized	Emphasized	
Research	155 23.9%	494 76.1%	221 34.3%	424 65.7%	-10.4%
Teaching	169 26.0%	481 74.0%	238 36.9%	407 63.1%	-10.9%
Administration & Management	354 54.6%	294 45.4%	342 53.4%	299 46.6%	1.2%
Social Services	357 55.1%	291 44.9%	409 64.4%	226 35.6%	-9.3%

**Table 4. Expectation of activities emphasized in promotion by number of higher education institutions employed since first degree**

Variable		1	>1	Total	Continuity Correction	Sig.
Research	Not Emphasized	83 (94.3%)	5 (5.7%)	88	3.969	0.05
	Emphasized	298 (98.7%)	4 (1.3%)	302		
	Total	381 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	390		
Teaching	Not Emphasized	93 (94.9%)	5 (5.1%)	98	3.070	0.08
	Emphasized	290 (98.6%)	4 (1.4%)	294		
	Total	383 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	392		
Administration and Management	Not Emphasized	208 (97.2%)	6 (2.8%)	214	0.158	0.69
	Emphasized	175 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)	178		
	Total	383 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	392		
Social Services	Not Emphasized	202 (97.1%)	6 (2.9%)	208	0.240	0.62
	Emphasized	181 (98.4%)	3 (1.6%)	184		
	Total	383 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	392		

**Promotion assessment and mobility**

Table 5 shows the cross-tabulations of actual emphasis on each of the core functions for assessment against mobility. The results show that there is no association between job mobility and whether research assessment is actually emphasized for promotion. The same trend is observed for actual assessment in other aspects. These imply that actual performance assessment emphasis in all aspects and job mobility are not related.

Table 6 cross-tabulates the expected emphasis on assessment of each of the core functions of academics with job satisfaction. The results show that there is no association between job satisfaction and expected emphasis for promotion based on each of the core functions (research; teaching; administrative duties; and social services).

**Table 5. Actual assessment for promotion by number of higher education institutions employed since first degree**

Variable		1	>1	Total	Continuity Correction	Sig.
Research	Not Emphasized	124 (96.1%)	5 (3.9%)	129	1.165	0.280
	Emphasized	255 (98.5%)	4 (1.5%)	259		
	Total	379 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	388		
Teaching	Not Emphasized	137 (96.5%)	5 (3.5%)	142	0.724	0.395
	Emphasized	243 (98.4%)	4 (1.6%)	247		
	Total	380 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	389		
Administration and Management	Not Emphasized	200 (97.1%)	6 (2.9%)	206	0.230	0.632
	Emphasized	178 (98.3%)	3 (1.7%)	181		
	Total	378 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	387		
Social Services	Not Emphasized	246 (97.6%)	6 (2.4%)	252	0.000	1.000
	Emphasized	130 (97.7%)	3 (2.3%)	133		
	Total	376 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	385		

**Table 6. Expectation of activities emphasized for promotion with current job satisfaction**

Variable		High	Moderate	Low	Total	Chi-Square	Sig.
Research	Not Emphasized	114 (73.5%)	35 (22.6%)	6 (3.9%)	155	1.401	0.496
	Emphasized	349 (70.9%)	130 (26.4%)	13 (2.6%)	492		
	Total	463 (71.6%)	165 (25.5%)	19 (2.9%)	647		
Teaching	Not Emphasized	118 (69.8%)	43 (25.4%)	8 (4.7%)	169	2.610	0.271
	Emphasized	344 (71.8%)	124 (25.9%)	11 (2.3%)	479		
	Total	462 (71.3%)	167 (25.8%)	19 (2.9%)	648		
Administration and Management	Not Emphasized	246 (69.5%)	94 (26.6%)	14 (4.0%)	354	3.209	0.201
	Emphasized	214 (73.3%)	73 (25.0%)	5 (1.7%)	292		
	Total	460 (71.2%)	167 (25.9%)	19 (2.9%)	646		
Social Services	Not Emphasized	248 (69.7%)	96 (27.0%)	12 (3.4%)	356	1.145	0.564
	Emphasized	212 (73.1%)	71 (24.5%)	7 (2.4%)	290		
	Total	460 (71.2%)	167 (25.9%)	19 (2.9%)	646		

### *Promotion assessment and job satisfaction*

Table 7 cross-tabulates the actual emphasis on assessment of each of the core functions of the academics against job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is significantly higher among those who perceive that research is emphasized in actual performance assessment. The same observation goes to those who perceive that social services are emphasized. However, there is no difference in job satisfaction between those who perceive that teaching, and administration and management works are emphasized in performance assessment with those who perceive otherwise.

**Table 7. Actual assessment with current job satisfaction**

Variable		High	Moderate	Low	Total	Chi-Square	Sig.
Research	Not Emphasized	128 (58.2%)	84 (38.2%)	8 (3.6%)	220	29.122	0.000
	Emphasized	331 (78.3%)	81 (19.1%)	11 (2.6%)	423		
	Total	459 (71.4%)	165 (25.7%)	19 (3.0%)	643		
Teaching	Not Emphasized	164 (68.9%)	67 (28.2%)	7 (2.9%)	238	1.084	0.582
	Emphasized	294 (72.6%)	99 (24.4%)	12 (3.0%)	405		
	Total	458 (71.2%)	166 (25.8%)	19 (3.0%)	643		
Administration and Management	Not Emphasized	239 (69.9%)	91 (26.6%)	12 (3.5%)	342	1.066	0.587
	Emphasized	216 (72.7%)	74 (24.9%)	7 (2.4%)	297		
	Total	455 (71.2%)	165 (25.8%)	19 (3.0%)	639		
Social Services	Not Emphasized	272 (66.5%)	121 (29.6%)	16 (3.9%)	409	12.640	0.002
	Emphasized	178 (79.5%)	43 (19.2%)	3 (1.3%)	224		
	Total	450 (71.1%)	164 (25.9%)	19 (3.0%)	633		

### ***Reasons for staying or leaving the institution***

Table 8 summarizes various categories for staying or leaving the institution based on the following considerations: income; resource for research; academic reputation of institution or department; academic cooperation among current colleagues; region in which the institution is based; teaching load; administration load; teaching language; and family reasons. The table shows that the academic profession is attractive. All factors show that the academics prefer to stay (responses 4 and 5) rather than to leave (1 and 2). The stronger factors are academic cooperation (60.1%); income (58.7%); research resource (56.5%); and family reasons (55.7%).

However, teaching load, administrative load and teaching language are not much of an issue in their considerations for staying or leaving. Basically teaching load is more or less the same among institutions and therefore is not a factor for leaving or staying. As in most institutions, administrative load does not apply to all since not many academics hold appointments such as department heads, directors, deans, or even higher. As for teaching language, most universities use English as medium of instruction especially in technical fields. However, they can use the national language if there are no foreign students in the course. There are still some courses that are taught in the national language.

**Table 8. Important considerations for staying or leaving**

	1*	2	3*	4	5*	6*	Total
Income	65 (10.0%)	42 (6.5%)	157 (24.2%)	182 (28.1%)	192 (29.6%)	10 (1.5%)	648 (100.0%)
Resources for research	61 (9.4%)	74 (11.3%)	139 (21.3%)	159 (24.4%)	209 (32.1%)	10 (1.5%)	652 (100.0%)
Academic reputation of institution/ department	37 (5.7%)	51 (7.9%)	184 (28.5%)	152 (23.6%)	209 (32.4%)	12 (1.9%)	645 (100.0%)
Academic cooperation among colleagues here	33 (5.1%)	60 (9.3%)	147 (22.7%)	160 (24.7%)	229 (35.4%)	18 (2.8%)	647 (100.0%)
Region in which this institution is located	43 (6.7%)	43 (6.7%)	200 (31.2%)	105 (16.4%)	237 (37.0%)	13 (2.0%)	641 (100.0%)
Teaching load	39 (6.1%)	53 (8.2%)	209 (32.5%)	151 (23.4%)	176 (27.3%)	16 (2.5%)	644 (100.0%)
Administrative load	46 (7.2%)	74 (11.5%)	219 (34.1%)	146 (22.7%)	135 (21.0%)	23 (3.6%)	643 (100.0%)
Teaching language	14 (2.2%)	35 (5.5%)	226 (35.4%)	145 (22.7%)	178 (27.9%)	40 (6.3%)	638 (100.0%)
Family reason	68 (10.6%)	50 (7.8%)	134 (20.8%)	79 (12.3%)	279 (43.4%)	33 (5.1%)	643 (100.0%)

\*1=strong reason to leave, 3= neutral, 5=strong reason to stay, 6=not applicable

To further investigate whether region plays a role in staying or leaving an institution due to certain reasons, whether the academics are staying or leaving due to region in which the institution is located was tabulated against other reasons in Table 9. A total of 187 respondents (65.6%) reported that they were thinking of leaving the institution because of income and region. While, 266 (79.4%) were 'staying' because of income and region. These imply that academics who stay or leave because of region are also those who stay or leave because of income. Association is also significant between reason to stay or leave due to region with those who stay or leave due to reasons of research resources; academic reputation; and academic cooperation.

The results also show that family and region are very closely connected. This is due to the reality that some academics have settled down, purchased a home and have been staying close to their parents or siblings. Thus family and region may be a strong consideration to stay or leave (if they are away from family).

Table 10 cross-tabulates familial reason for leaving or staying against familial status. Of those who said that they were leaving because of familial status, 81.9% were married; whereas of those who said that they were staying because of familial reasons, 89.7% were married. It is therefore implied that the majority of those who are leaving have their spouses staying or moving with them.

Table 11 cross-tabulates family reason for leaving or staying with spouse against whether the spouse is also an academic. It is shown that there is no association between consideration to stay or leave and those whose spouse is in the same profession or otherwise. This finding supports the previous one that when one wishes to stay or leave, he/she just stays or leaves with the family, irrespective of whether the spouse is from the same profession or otherwise.

Table 12 cross-tabulates family reason for leaving or staying against the number of children living with them. The findings show that there is no association between consideration to stay or leave with the number of children living with them. This again strengthens the previous findings that when they need to stay or leave, they just stay or leave without taking into consideration the family size.

**Table 9. Cross tabulation of staying/leaving against consideration because of region**

Variable		Leaving	Staying	Total	Continuity Correction	Sig.
Income	Leaving	187 (65.6%)	98 (34.4%)	285	126.884	.000
	Staying	69 (20.6%)	266 (79.4%)	335		
	Total	256 (41.3%)	364 (58.7%)	620		
Resources for research	Leaving	187 (65.4%)	99 (34.6%)	286	110.638	.000
	Staying	78 (23.2%)	258 (76.8%)	336		
	Total	265 (42.6%)	357 (57.4%)	622		
Academic reputation of institution/ department	Leaving	192 (68.3%)	89 (31.7%)	281	134.969	.000
	Staying	72 (21.5%)	263 (78.5%)	335		
	Total	264 (42.9%)	352 (57.1%)	616		
Cooperation among colleagues here	Leaving	187 (66.8%)	93 (33.2%)	280	171.636	.000
	Staying	50 (14.9%)	286 (85.1%)	336		
	Total	237 (38.5%)	379 (61.5%)	616		
Teaching load	Leaving	221 (78.1%)	62 (21.9%)	283	186.142	.000
	Staying	74 (22.5%)	225 (77.5%)	329		
	Total	295 (48.2%)	317 (51.8%)	612		
Administrative load	Leaving	241 (85.2%)	42 (14.8%)	283	195.825	.000
	Staying	90 (28.0%)	231 (72.0%)	321		
	Total	331 (54.8%)	273 (45.2%)	604		
Teaching language	Leaving	202 (75.1%)	67 (24.9%)	269	161.586	.000
	Staying	70 (22.2%)	246 (77.8%)	316		
	Total	272 (46.5%)	313 (53.5%)	585		
Family reason	Leaving	206 (74.6%)	70 (25.4%)	276	243.505	.000
	Staying	36 (11.3%)	283 (88.7%)	319		
	Total	242 (40.7%)	353 (59.3%)	595		

**Table 10. Cross tabulation of family reason for leaving or staying against familial status**

Variable	Married/ partner	Single	Other	Total	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig (2 sided)	
Familial status	Leaving	203 (81.9%)	44 (17.7%)	1 (0.4%)	248	8.403	0.015
	Staying	313 (89.7%)	36 (10.3%)	0 (0.0%)	349		
	Total	516 (86.4%)	80 (13.4%)	1 (0.2%)	597		

**Table 11. Cross tabulation of family reason for leaving or staying against spouse who is also an academic**

Variable	Yes	No	Total	Continuity Correction	Asymp. Sig (2 sided)	
Academic partner	Leaving	85 (39.7%)	129 (60.3%)	214	1.770	0.183
	Staying	151 (45.9%)	178 (54.1%)	329		
	Total	236 (43.5%)	307 (56.5%)	543		

**Table 12. Cross tabulation of family reasons for leaving/staying with whether they have children living with them**

Variable	Yes, 1 child	Yes, 2 children	Yes, 3 or more children	No	Total	Pearson Chi- Square	Asymp. Sig (2 sided)
Employment of partner	Leaving	39 (17.0%)	48 (20.9%)	79 (34.3%)	64 (27.8%)	2.971	0.396
	Staying	68 (19.8%)	73 (21.2%)	128 (37.2%)	75 (21.8%)		
	Total	107 (18.6%)	121 (21.1%)	207 (36.1%)	139 (24.2%)		

## ***Discussion***

Research performance of Malaysian public universities are monitored closely by the Ministry of Education (MOE) by the Project Management Office (PMO) through the Critical Agenda Project (this is no more relevant under the new Higher Education transformation plan) and Malaysian Research Assessment (MyRA). As mentioned earlier, MyRA is used to evaluate the capacity of the institutions of higher learning in achieving excellence in research. Excellence is measured based on the gap of each institution with the benchmark set for Malaysian research universities.

In comparing the expected and actual emphasis on assessment for promotion based on the four core functions of the academics: research; teaching; administration and management; and social services, findings of this study showed that research, teaching, and social services are less assessed compared to what the academics expected, and administration is assessed slightly more than what they expected. There exists a profound gap between the expected and actual evaluation for administrative duties, which implies academic leadership. Scores are given based on the position held, such as deans, directors, deputy deans, department heads, or program coordinator. One gets a plus point by being in an administrative position especially during the time that they are applying for promotion. In the study by Azman, Sirat, and Dahlan (2012), they found that generally, both RUs and non -RUs have the same range of weighting for academic leadership/service to university and community for promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer with a range of 10-15 percent weighting given for these criteria and a range of 10-30 percent for promotion from associate professor to professor.

Thus, institutional leaders and managers need to narrow these gaps in order to increase satisfaction among academics. Weighting for criteria and sub-criteria must be made transparent and evidence produced to support achievement in each of the criteria must be made explicit. Universities must document the performance standards and merit that quantify relative values objectively for the promotion criteria. As highlighted by Azman, Sirat, and Dahlan (2012), universities must have explicit quantitative measures and numeric standards for what is expected to demonstrate target levels of contributions.

As shown in the study, all academics know that the greatest emphasis in promotion is on research. It is common knowledge to all academics from their first day joining academia. In this aspect, academics' expectations meet

the institutional needs. The KPI set for the institution by MOE is passed down to faculties and academics. As a practice in the Universiti Putra Malaysia, early in the year, there is negotiation process for each custodian of the KPI with the deans or the directors of institutes or centers. For instance, MOE policy requires that the university must achieve a certain number of citations or impact factor for the year. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) will then decide the KPI for each faculty and research institute based on past years' performance and the number of academics in the faculty/institute. There is some room for negotiation. However, the number cannot be reduced much in order for the university to achieve the KPI set by the ministry unless another faculty is able to make up on whatever is lacking in a faculty. Once the faculty/institute's KPI is agreed upon, the faculty will then determine the KPIs for the academics which is made according to academic ranks.

There is a difference between meeting the institution's KPIs and one's personal KPI. For promotion, each criteria and sub-criteria must be fulfilled. Thus, negotiation may not benefit an academic in the long run because they may not meet the requirement for promotion.

Family cohesiveness is strong among most Malaysians. This is evident from the findings of the study that showed the decision to stay or leave the institution where employed much depends on family reasons. There is at least one public university in all the thirteen states in Malaysia. This allows mobility among academics to choose to be near their family. Other strong reasons for staying are 'academic cooperation among colleagues' and 'region in which the institution is located'. Region is a very important decision in deciding to stay. One may not leave to a region that is far from their present residence.

Important considerations in deciding to leave include income and resources for research. This shows that one would leave if offered a promotion in another institution. However, for those who are very research oriented, their decision in staying or leaving much depends on the resources available for research. Less established universities may not have the resources to support their research work, thus the less lenient promotion criteria may not be everything that matters to a research passionate academic.

Job satisfaction is related to the decision to stay or leave. The present study shows that job satisfaction is significantly higher among those who perceive that research is emphasized in actual performance assessment. Thus, those who are excellent in research will normally stay although greater

emphasis is given to research in promotion.

In the last few years, the role of an academic in providing social services has been given greater emphasis. MOE and the institution need to ensure that universities remain relevant to society. Grants such as the knowledge transfer program (KTP) was introduced to recognize and promote the transfer of knowledge via the exchange of creative and innovative ideas, research findings, experiences and skills between public universities, research organizations, industries, government agencies and the wider community.

## **Conclusion**

As is known to all academics, excellence in research related activities remain as the main criteria for promotion. To date, there are no universities employing the teaching track for promotion although some universities have introduced the clinical professor track to promote clinicians who may not have substantial research outputs to help them gain promotion. The active movement of clinicians out of academia has prompted the introduction of this track.

In discussing promotion, it is rather hard to meet academics' expectation with institutional needs. The institutional KPI is set by MOE through various measures such as MyRA (MOE, 2013) and Rating for Higher Education Institutions (SETARA) conducted by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. SETARA is more focused on teaching and learning excellence while MyRA is on research excellence. The institutional KPI set by MOE is then passed down to faculties and individual academics. Thus, academics may feel that other criteria should be used in measuring their performance, which may not be in line with the institutional targets to be met.

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