Role Profile: Associate Professor

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1. Position information

Element	Description
Position title	Associate Professor
Faculty/department	[Insert faculty and academic department]
Reports to	Head of Department / School Director / Executive Dean
Academic level	Senior academic and emerging institutional leader
Employment category	Permanent / fixed-term academic appointment
Direct reports	Academic staff, researchers, research assistants and/or administrative staff, where applicable
Location	[Insert institution and campus]

2. Role purpose

The Associate Professor provides advanced academic leadership through high-quality teaching, recognised research, postgraduate supervision, curriculum development and engagement with the institution, profession and wider community.

The role is responsible for contributing to the institution's academic reputation, research output, student success and strategic objectives. The incumbent is expected to demonstrate growing national or international standing in their discipline and to provide intellectual leadership within the department, faculty and broader academic community.

3. Minimum requirements

Qualifications

- A relevant doctoral degree or equivalent terminal qualification.
- A recognised academic record appropriate to the discipline.

- Registration with a relevant professional body where required.

Experience

- Normally at least five to eight years' relevant academic experience, including experience at Senior Lecturer level or equivalent.
- Demonstrated experience in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.
- A sustained record of accredited research publications or recognised discipline-specific research outputs.
- Successful postgraduate supervision, including master's and preferably doctoral candidates.
- Evidence of curriculum development and academic programme leadership.
- Experience in academic administration, committees and institutional governance.
- Evidence of professional, industry or community engagement.

4. Key performance areas and indicators

The proposed weightings should be adjusted to reflect the institution's academic model, discipline and workload allocation.

Key performance area	Indicative weighting	Key performance indicators
Teaching and learning	25%	Teaching quality, student success, curriculum relevance, assessment quality and educational innovation
Research and scholarly contribution	30%	Accredited outputs, research impact, grants, collaboration and academic reputation
Postgraduate supervision	15%	Student progress, completions, research quality and development of emerging researchers
Academic leadership and administration	15%	Programme leadership, committee contribution, governance and operational delivery
Engagement and external impact	10%	Industry, professional, community and policy contribution
Transformation and people development	5%	Mentoring, inclusion, capacity building and contribution to institutional transformation

KPA 1: Teaching and learning

Key responsibilities

- Design and deliver academically rigorous undergraduate and postgraduate modules.

- Apply appropriate teaching methods across face-to-face, blended and digital learning environments.
- Develop and regularly review curricula to maintain academic, professional and industry relevance.
- Design fair, valid and reliable assessments.
- Use student performance data and feedback to improve teaching and learning.
- Support student retention, progression and academic success.
- Integrate current research, technology and responsible use of artificial intelligence into teaching.
- Participate in programme accreditation and quality-assurance processes.

KPIs

- Teaching responsibilities delivered in accordance with the approved workload plan.
- Achievement of agreed module success, throughput and retention targets.
- Positive student and peer-review feedback, interpreted together with relevant academic evidence.
- Timely completion of assessment, moderation and submission of results.
- Curricula and learning materials reviewed within agreed institutional cycles.
- Evidence of at least one meaningful teaching or assessment innovation per review period.
- Full compliance with accreditation, moderation and quality-assurance requirements.
- Early identification and support of academically at-risk students.

KPA 2: Research and scholarly contribution

Key responsibilities

- Maintain an active and coherent programme of research.
- Publish in accredited, peer-reviewed and reputable journals or produce recognised discipline-specific outputs.
- Present research at appropriate national and international conferences.
- Apply for external research funding and participate in collaborative research projects.
- Contribute to the institution's research strategy and academic reputation.
- Develop research partnerships with other institutions, industry and professional bodies.

- Translate research into practical, policy, societal or commercial impact where appropriate.
- Ensure that all research complies with ethics, integrity and data-governance requirements.

KPIs

- Achievement of the institution's agreed annual or rolling research-output target.
- Publication of quality research outputs appropriate to the discipline and academic level.
- Submission of competitive research-funding applications.
- Research income secured against agreed targets, where applicable.
- Evidence of national or international research collaboration.
- Participation in conference presentations, invited lectures, editorial work or peer review.
- Demonstrable research impact through citations, policy influence, professional adoption, innovation or community benefit.
- Compliance with research ethics and integrity requirements.
- Progress toward a recognised national or international scholarly profile, including an NRF rating where relevant.

KPA 3: Postgraduate supervision and research capacity development

Key responsibilities

- Supervise master's and doctoral candidates.
- Support students in developing sound research proposals and methodologies.
- Monitor candidate progress and address delays or academic risks.
- Develop postgraduate research capacity through seminars, workshops and research groups.
- Mentor early-career academics and emerging researchers.
- Participate in the examination of postgraduate dissertations and theses.

KPIs

- Agreed number of active postgraduate students supervised.
- Satisfactory progress against approved postgraduate milestones.
- Master's and doctoral completions within reasonable institutional timeframes.

- Quality of completed dissertations, theses and resulting publications.
- Student retention and completion rates.
- Evidence of co-publication or conference participation with postgraduate students.
- Contribution to postgraduate seminars and researcher-development initiatives.
- Mentoring outcomes for early-career academics and researchers.

KPA 4: Academic leadership, management and governance

Key responsibilities

- Provide intellectual and academic leadership within the department or school.
- Lead or coordinate programmes, modules, research groups or strategic academic projects.
- Contribute to faculty and institutional planning.
- Participate in committees, programme reviews and quality-assurance activities.
- Support workload planning, resource allocation and academic scheduling.
- Contribute to recruitment, selection, induction and development of academic staff.
- Promote sound academic governance and compliance.
- Act for the Head of Department or School Director when required.

KPIs

- Effective delivery of assigned programme or portfolio responsibilities.
- Academic and administrative deadlines consistently met.
- Constructive contribution to departmental, faculty and institutional committees.
- Successful completion of programme reviews, accreditation processes and improvement plans.
- Effective coordination of academic staff and resources.
- Identified governance, quality or operational risks addressed promptly.
- Evidence of contribution to departmental or faculty strategy.
- Positive stakeholder feedback on academic leadership and collaboration.

KPA 5: Engagement, professional contribution and societal impact

Key responsibilities

- Build relationships with industry, professional bodies, government, alumni and community partners.
- Apply academic expertise to relevant societal and institutional challenges.
- Contribute to executive education, short courses, continuing professional development or advisory work.
- Participate in public scholarship and professional forums.
- Develop work-integrated learning, research or employability partnerships where appropriate.
- Represent the institution in relevant external structures.

KPIs

- Number and quality of active external partnerships.
- Evidence of measurable societal, professional, policy or industry impact.
- Contribution to external income-generating or funded initiatives, where applicable.
- Participation in professional bodies, advisory panels or external committees.
- Delivery of public lectures, media contributions or thought-leadership activities.
- Contribution to student placement, experiential learning or graduate-employability opportunities.
- Stakeholder satisfaction and continuity of strategic partnerships.

KPA 6: Transformation, collegiality and institutional citizenship

Key responsibilities

- Contribute to the institution's transformation, diversity, equity and inclusion objectives.
- Promote a respectful, ethical and collegial academic environment.
- Mentor junior academics and support succession and capacity development.
- Participate in institutional events and academic-community activities.
- Demonstrate responsible stewardship of institutional resources.
- Support interdisciplinary and cross-functional collaboration.

KPIs

- Demonstrable contribution to agreed transformation objectives.
- Effective mentoring or development of junior and emerging academics.

- Constructive participation in departmental and institutional initiatives.
- Evidence of collaboration across disciplines, faculties or support functions.
- Compliance with institutional policies, codes of conduct and ethical requirements.
- Positive contribution to institutional culture and academic citizenship.

5. Competency requirements

Academic and professional competencies

- Advanced subject-matter expertise.
- Curriculum design and programme-development capability.
- Contemporary teaching, learning and assessment practice.
- Advanced research design and methodology.
- Scholarly writing and publication.
- Postgraduate supervision.
- Research ethics and academic-integrity management.
- Knowledge of higher-education quality assurance and accreditation.
- Understanding of the South African higher-education environment.

Leadership competencies

- Academic and intellectual leadership.
- Strategic thinking and institutional awareness.
- Ability to lead programmes, projects and research teams.
- Mentoring and development of academic talent.
- Sound judgement and evidence-based decision-making.
- Change leadership and innovation.
- Stakeholder engagement and influence.
- Constructive management of conflict and competing priorities.

Digital and analytical competencies

- Digital teaching and learning capability.
- Data literacy and interpretation of student and workforce information.
- Ability to use analytics to improve academic decisions.

- Responsible use of generative AI and other emerging technologies.
- Understanding of privacy, cybersecurity, intellectual property and ethical AI.
- Ability to evaluate the reliability, bias and limitations of AI-generated outputs.

Behavioural competencies

- Integrity and ethical conduct.
- Academic independence and intellectual curiosity.
- Accountability and delivery orientation.
- Collegiality and collaboration.
- Inclusivity and cultural awareness.
- Adaptability and willingness to learn.
- Clear written and verbal communication.
- Resilience and effective self-management.
- Commitment to student success and public value.

6. Key relationships

Internal stakeholders

- Executive Dean and Deputy Deans
- Head of Department or School Director
- Academic and professional support staff
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Research, teaching and learning, finance and HR functions
- Institutional committees and governance structures

External stakeholders

- Universities and research institutions
- Professional and statutory bodies
- Government departments and public entities
- Industry and funding partners
- Alumni and community organisations
- Journal editors, reviewers and academic networks

7. Performance assessment principles

Performance should be evaluated against an agreed annual workload and performance contract. Measures should recognise differences between disciplines and balance quantity with quality, impact and academic integrity.

The institution should avoid assessing the role through publication numbers alone. A balanced evaluation should consider:

- teaching quality and student outcomes;
- research quality, contribution and impact;
- postgraduate development and completion;
- academic leadership and governance;
- institutional citizenship;
- external engagement; and
- contribution to transformation and strategic priorities.

KPI targets should be finalised annually based on the faculty's strategy, available resources, academic workload model and the Associate Professor's agreed area of contribution.

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