Recognition Scheme Procedure

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Procedure must be read in conjunction with the Recognition Scheme Policy, which sets out the criteria and eligibility requirements for an individual or team award.

1.2 This document describes the procedures for awards for all staff, including Academic, Research, Academic-Related, and Support Staff, and Associate Lecturers.

2. Communication

2.1 The Recognition Scheme details should be circulated to staff annually, along with timetables.

3. Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Awards

3.1 GEM Awards are available for line managers to use as a way of recognising and rewarding outstanding individual or team contributions by staff throughout the year.

3.2 The criteria for GEM Awards are set out in the Recognition and Reward Scheme Policy, and Appendix 1 below.

3.3 It is the responsibility of the line manager to:

- Identify the opportunity for a GEM award, although suggestions for a GEM Award may be initiated by any work colleague.
- To ensure nomination meets the criteria for GEM Awards, set out in Reward Policy.
- Secure the agreement of the Head of Business Unit and People Business Partner. In meta units such as Academic Services and CIO, the designated Head of Unit may be unit within the overall business unit, for example, SRF or IT.
- Raise the approved GEM Award on the Success Factors system for payment.

3.4 For agency workers, details of any individual award approved, should be sent to the People-Hub@open.ac.uk for processing.

3.5 GEM Awards are paid at any time, as close as possible to the event that triggered the award. See Appendix 1 below for further information on GEM Awards.

3.6 The administrative process of system entry and validation must be completed before the payroll deadline. Entries made later than this date cannot be guaranteed to be processed in time for that month's payroll.

4. Associate Lecturer GEM Awards

4.1 From 1 December 2026, Associate Lecturers are eligible for GEM Awards for individual and team contributions that meet the criteria set out in the Recognition Scheme Policy and this Procedure.

4.2 Associate Lecturers may be recognised for a specific contribution, action, activity or aspect of their role that goes above and beyond normal day-to-day expectations and demonstrates the University's Values in Action. An Associate Lecturer does not need to demonstrate exceptional performance across their whole role to be eligible for a GEM Award. The assessment should focus on the contribution being recognised.

4.3 For Associate Lecturers, suggestions for a GEM Award may be initiated by a peer, Staff Tutor or line manager who has worked with the Associate Lecturer. Any recommendation should be made via the Associate Lecturer's line manager, who is responsible for considering the recommendation and taking forward the nomination through the relevant unit approval process. Associate Lecturers cannot self-nominate for a GEM Award.

4.4 Where an Associate Lecturer works across multiple modules, teams or areas, the colleague making the recommendation should provide the details of the contribution to the Associate Lecturer's line manager. The line manager is responsible for considering the recommendation, consulting with colleagues where appropriate, and taking the nomination forward through the relevant unit approval process.

4.5 Units may have different working and management structures for Associate Lecturers. Where appropriate, Units may establish local arrangements to support the identification and progression of GEM

nominations, while ensuring that the University-wide principles and approval requirements are followed.

4.6 The standard GEM approval process applies to Associate Lecturer GEM Awards. Final approval by the Head of Unit (or designated nominee), with agreement from the People Business Partner, is required before the line manager submits the GEM Award nomination via SuccessFactors.

4.7 Following unit approval, the line manager should communicate the award directly to the Associate Lecturer where practicable, before the SuccessFactors notification is issued. The line manager should explain the contribution or behaviour being recognised and the relevant Values in Action.

4.8 GEM Awards are intended to provide timely recognition of recent contributions. Nominations should normally relate to a recent contribution or achievement and should not be used to recognise historic achievements from previous years.

5. Allocation of funds

5.1 We recommend limiting the total annual number of awards to no more than 20% of a unit's headcount. This figure is provided as a guideline, and it will be the responsibility of each unit to manage its award-related expenses.

6. Useful references

6.1 Recognition Scheme Policy

6.2 GEM Nomination Form

6.3 Values in Action Framework

6.4 GEM Process Map

6.5 AL GEM Process Map

7. Version control

Version number: 2.0, effective from 29 October 2026.

Summary of revisions: Recognition and Reward Policy separated into two distinct policies. Added details about AL GEM Awards commencing from 1 December 2026. Added Appendix 2 FAQs.

Appendix 1: Criteria for Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Awards

From the 2024/25 Academic year, GEM Awards will transition to align with the Open University's updated behavioural framework, focusing on reinforcing the university-wide Values in Action, for both individual and team efforts.

Acknowledging the importance of regular contributions that align with core values reinforces the University's commitment to fostering a collaborative, inclusive, and high-performing community.

Individual GEM Awards

Criteria

GEM Awards recognise individuals who embody the University's core values in both exceptional actions and routine contributions. Nominees need to demonstrate qualities that bring these values to life.

- **Inclusive:** Being **respectful** and **proactive** in contributing to a culture of belonging for all colleagues and students. Has the nominee recognised, supported, and championed diverse voices in their work? Have they made significant contributions to a culture or belonging for all in their team or unit?
- **Innovative:** Being **curious** and **collaborative,** connecting across the University, and sharing learning and ideas. Has the nominee introduced creative solutions or continuous improvements in regular workflows that have had a lasting positive impact?
- **Responsive:** Being **flexible** and **outcome focused**, ensuring what we deliver is simple, effective and mindful of the needs of colleagues. Has

the nominee been quick to address new demands or the needs of colleagues and students within business as usual? Have they flexed and adapted to deliver a better end result in their work?

Team GEM Awards

The Team GEM Award recognises groups of employees who collaboratively achieve impactful results aligned with the Open University's Values in Action. This can be within local teams or cross-unit teams i.e. project groups. Each team member who qualifies for a Team GEM Award will receive £125, ensuring fair acknowledgment of collective success.

Criteria

- **Collaboration impact**
  Teams are recognised based on demonstrated success through collaboration, with each team member's role and contribution clearly identified and aligned to the Values in Action Framework.
- **Individual and collective impact**
  The team's accomplishments need to meaningfully contribute to the University community, either through specific projects or by demonstrating that they have gone above and beyond in their collective everyday roles.

Team GEM Award examples

- **Innovation and problem-solving:** Project teams delivering significant improvements through innovative collaboration.
- **Process adaptability:** Department teams displaying flexibility and responsiveness that benefits the University.

- **Inclusive initiatives:** Cross-departmental teams that prioritise inclusivity, ensuring diverse perspectives are valued in project development.

Approval process

The rules and monetary value for GEM Awards are the same for both individual GEM Awards and Team GEM Awards. All individuals, and each team member who qualifies for a Team GEM Award, will receive £125 (gross).

It is the responsibility of the line manager to Identify the opportunity for a GEM award, although suggestions for a GEM Award may be initiated by any work colleague.

For all GEM Awards, approval must be obtained before the line manager submits the request in SuccessFactors. Line managers are responsible for understanding and adhering to the Unit's specific nomination and approval guidelines, which may vary by department and include a localised review process. This ensures consistency and compliance with all procedural requirements prior to submission.

Final approval by the Head of Unit (or designated nominee), with agreement from the People Business Partner, is required before the line manager submits the GEM Award nomination via SuccessFactors.

Local team (within same unit)

For Team GEM Awards for local teams, the line manager should nominate the team for an award, verifying that each team member played a role in the achievement.

Cross-unit team (project teams)

For Team GEM Awards for cross-unit teams, the project lead(s) should nominate the team for an award, verifying that each team member played a role in the achievement. The project lead should discuss this with each colleague's line manager, who will need to review the nomination. Units may have their own local processes in place, and flexibility may be needed to accommodate requests to ensure equity across the whole team.

Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

I'm new to the University. What is the Recognition Scheme?

The Recognition Scheme is designed to recognise and celebrate colleagues who have gone above and beyond normal day-to-day expectations and have made a positive impact through behaviours aligned to the University's Values in Action. Recognition can be given to individuals or teams.

Who can receive a GEM Award?

GEM Awards are open to all staff, including Academic, Research, Academic-Related, Support Staff, and Associate Lecturers. Awards may be made to individuals or teams that meet the scheme criteria.

What is a GEM Award?

A Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Award is a one-off payment of £125 (gross) that recognises a specific contribution, action, activity or achievement that has made a real difference and demonstrates the University's Values in Action.

Do I need to be an exceptional performer in every aspect of my role to receive a GEM Award?

No. GEM Awards recognise a specific contribution or achievement. An individual does not need to demonstrate exceptional performance across their entire role to be eligible.

What types of contributions can be recognised?

Examples include actions that demonstrate the University's Values in Action by being Inclusive, Innovative or Responsive, whether through a specific piece of work, supporting colleagues or students, improving processes, solving problems, or contributing to a culture of belonging.

Can anyone recommend someone for a GEM Award?

Yes. Any colleague can recommend an individual or team for recognition. Recommendations should be shared with the nominee's line manager, who is

responsible for considering the nomination and taking it through the relevant approval

Can I nominate myself for a GEM Award?

No. Self-nominations are not permitted under the Recognition Scheme.

How are GEM Awards approved?

All GEM Awards require approval through the relevant unit process. Final approval must be obtained from the Unit/Faculty Head (or designated nominee), with agreement from the People Business Partner, before the award is submitted through SuccessFactors.

When are GEM Awards paid?

GEM Awards are intended to provide timely recognition and are normally paid as close as possible to the contribution or achievement being recognised, subject to payroll deadlines.

How many GEM Awards can someone receive?

An individual can receive a maximum of four GEM Awards in an academic year, including both individual and team awards.

Can teams receive a GEM Award?

Yes. Team GEM Awards can be awarded to local teams or cross-unit teams where colleagues have worked together to achieve a significant outcome aligned to the University's Values in Action. Each eligible team member will receive a GEM Award.

I am an Associate Lecturer. Am I eligible for a GEM Award?

Yes. From 1 December 2026, Associate Lecturers are eligible for both individual and team GEM Awards where their contribution meets the Recognition Scheme criteria.

How can an Associate Lecturer be nominated?

Recommendations may be made by colleagues who have worked with the Associate Lecturer, including peers, Staff Tutors and line managers. The

recommendation should be made through the Associate Lecturer's line manager, who will consider and progress the nomination where appropriate.

I am an Associate Lecturer working across several modules or teams. How will my contribution be considered?

Colleagues making the recommendation should provide details of the contribution to the Associate Lecturer's line manager. The line manager may seek input from colleagues across different modules or teams before deciding whether to progress the nomination.

Can a GEM Award be used to recognise an achievement from several years ago?

No. GEM Awards are intended to recognise recent contributions and achievements. Nominations should normally relate to something that has happened recently, rather than historic achievements.

Does receiving a GEM Award affect pay progression, promotion or CDSA outcomes?

No. GEM Awards are separate from contractual pay arrangements, promotion processes and CDSA outcomes. They provide one-off recognition for a specific contribution or achievement.

How can I find out who an Associate Lecturer's line manager is?

You can check the colleague's organisational details in Microsoft Outlook by selecting their name and viewing their organisational information. If you are unsure who their line manager is, contact your local management team or People Business Partner for guidance.

How do I find out about my local nomination and approval process?

Local arrangements may vary depending on the unit's management structure. Your line manager or People Business Partner can advise you on the relevant local process. All nominations must follow the University-wide requirements, including final approval by the Unit/Faculty Head (or designated nominee), with agreement from the People Business Partner, before submission through SuccessFactors.

Will student feedback be considered when nominating an Associate Lecturer for a GEM Award?

No. Student feedback is not used as part of the GEM Award nomination process. Nominations should focus on the specific contribution, action or achievement being recognised and how it demonstrates the University's Values in Action.

What happens if an Associate Lecturer works with several teams or has more than one management contact?

A recommendation should be shared with the Associate Lecturer's line manager, who is responsible for considering it and taking it forward through the relevant unit approval process. The line manager may consult colleagues across modules, teams or faculties to understand the contribution and ensure it is considered appropriately.