



اَوْبُوْرَسِيْتِي تِيْكُوْلُوْمِي مَارَا
UNIVERSITI
TEKNOLOGI
MARA

On Becoming a Professor

Profesor Dr. Ahmad Sazali Hamzah

Pengerusi Majlis Profesor UiTM

15 Mac 2021

asazali@uitm.edu.my

Definition of a Successful Academic



A strong research track record

Publication, supervision, grants, patents etc.



Educational excellence

Student and peer evaluation, advancement in discipline



International and national collaboration

With colleagues, industry, translate your knowledge and expertise into practice and policy



Leadership

Groups, initiatives to achieve optimal outcomes

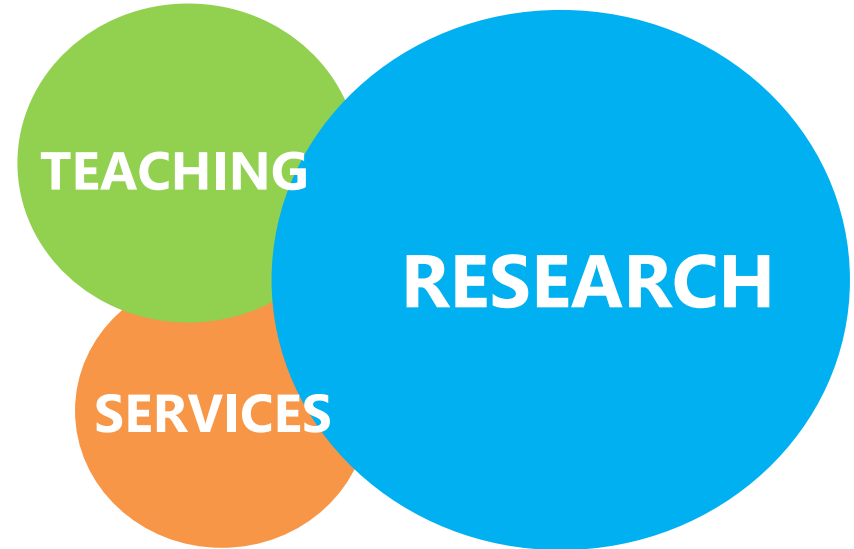
Expectation of an Academic



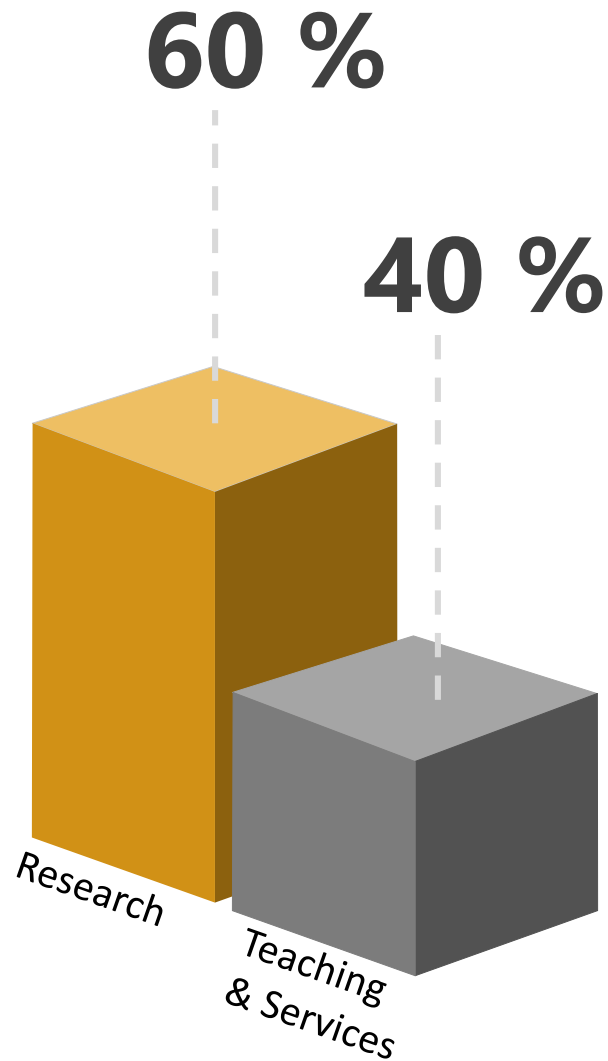
ITM



UiTM



Professors



Research

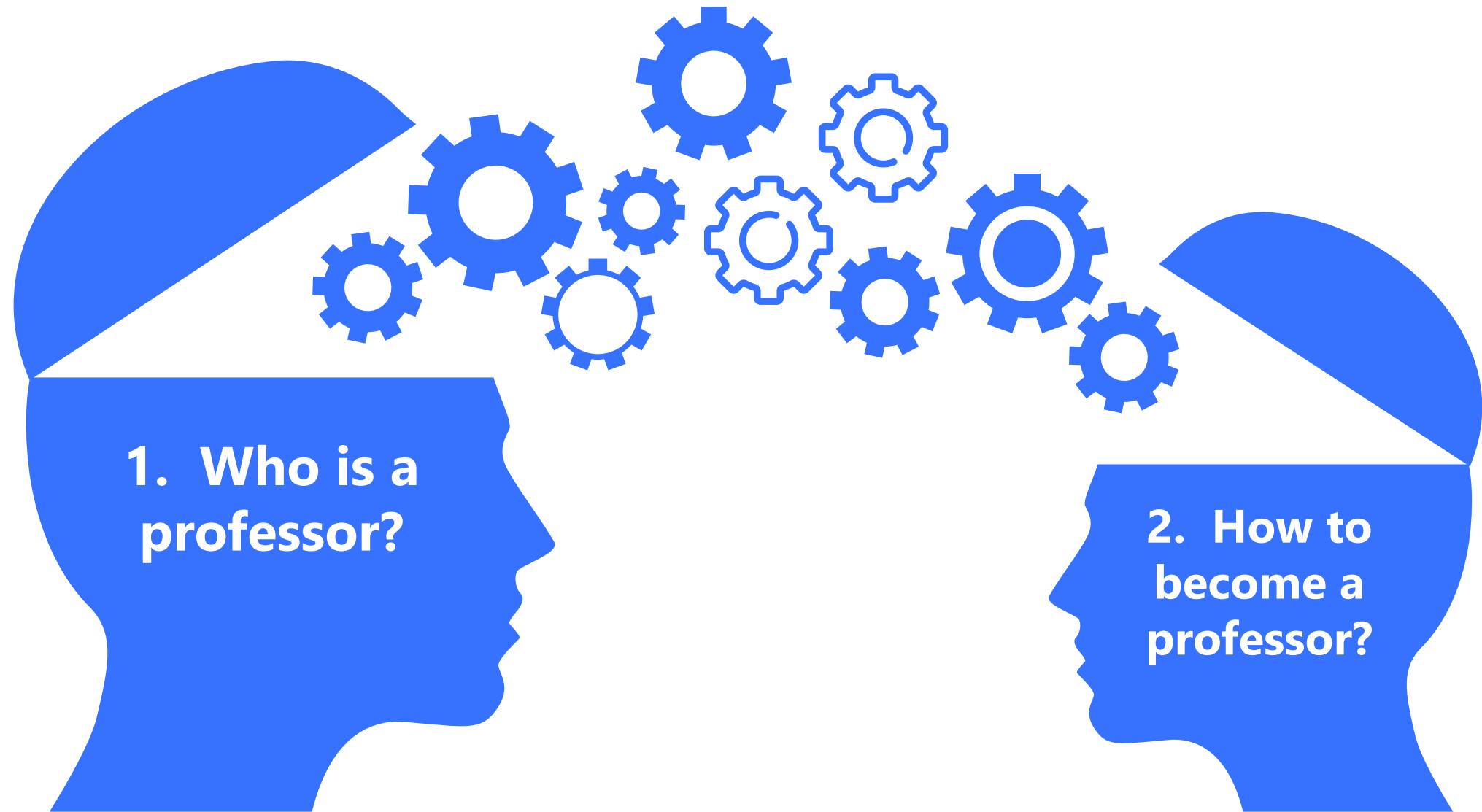
Appointments are based on Research (60%) and...



Teaching & Services

Mainly research plus teaching and services (40%)

AGENDA



Who is a Professor?

1

- A University Professor is a high academic rank in a university, in charge of publishing journals and conducting research in a particular field

2

- The title just seems so prestigious and you would do anything to get it in front of your name. Unfortunately, not everybody can be a professor. It takes a great deal of knowledge and experience to be one.

3

- Professors have to specialise in a particular subject, so much so, that they do in-depth research and find out everything there is to the field.

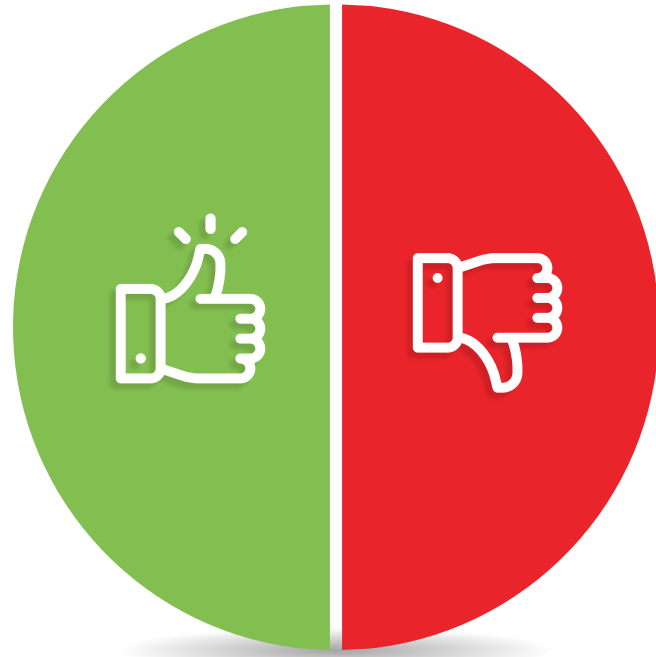
4

- Additionally, professors must obtain a PhD and have published various academic papers.

The Pros and Cons of Being a University Professor

PROS

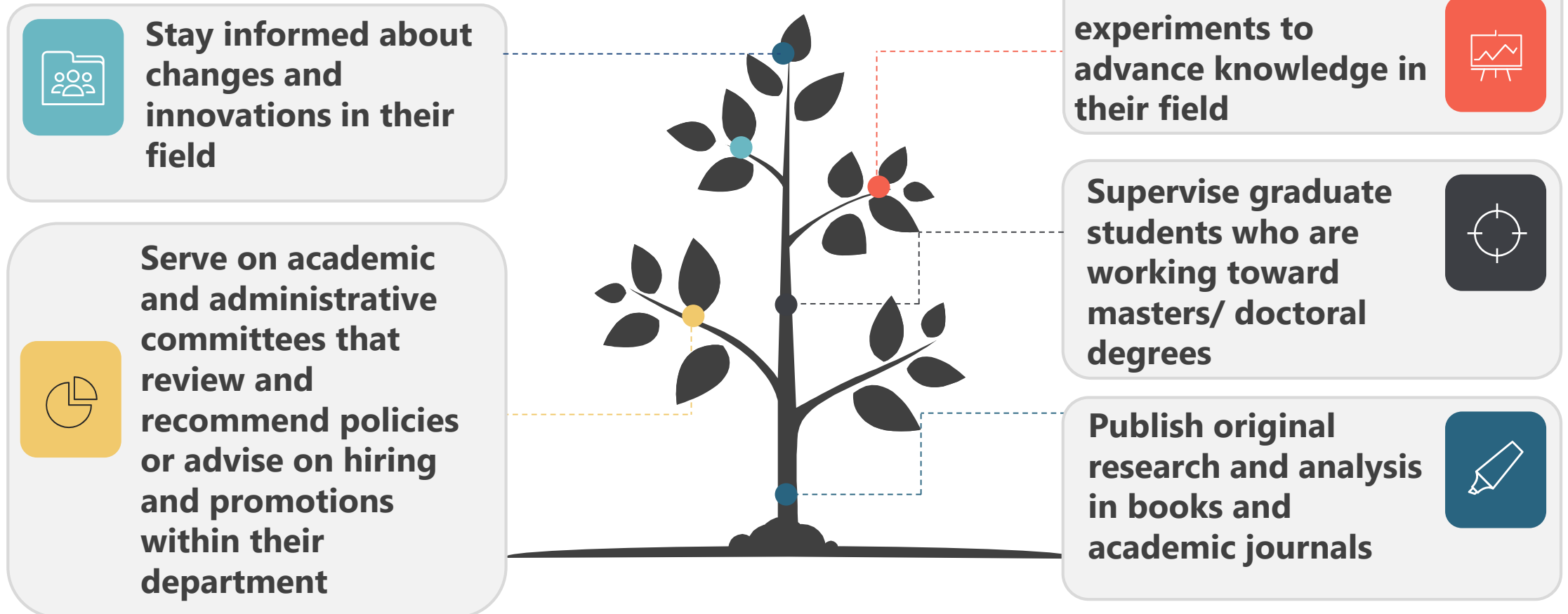
- Highly ranked and respected in the faculty, university and field of work
- Better paid
- Sense of accomplishment
- Freedom in choosing projects



CONS

- Heavy responsibilities and high expectations
- Competitive environment
- Longer working hours

What are the Responsibilities of a University Professor?



What skills do you need to become a University Professor?

01

Knowledgeable

You need knowledge and plenty of it. With your knowledge and experience, you are able to properly guide the university students to excel in their education as well

02

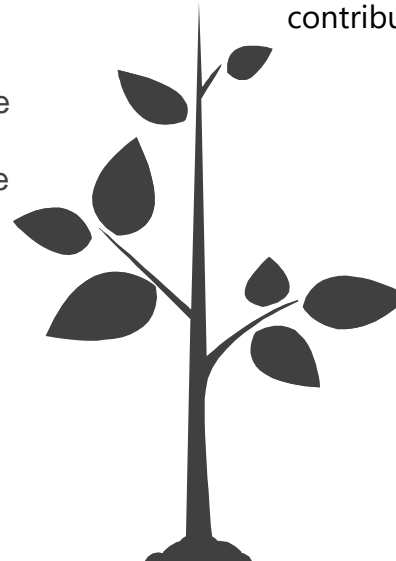
Patience

A University Professor's job is to work in a university, be facing students most of the time. You will need to patiently guide them through their education journey. You will meet all kinds of students: those who are still confused of what to do the day before the assignment deadline and those who just want tips in exams. Either way, a professor is there to guide students through their university life.

03

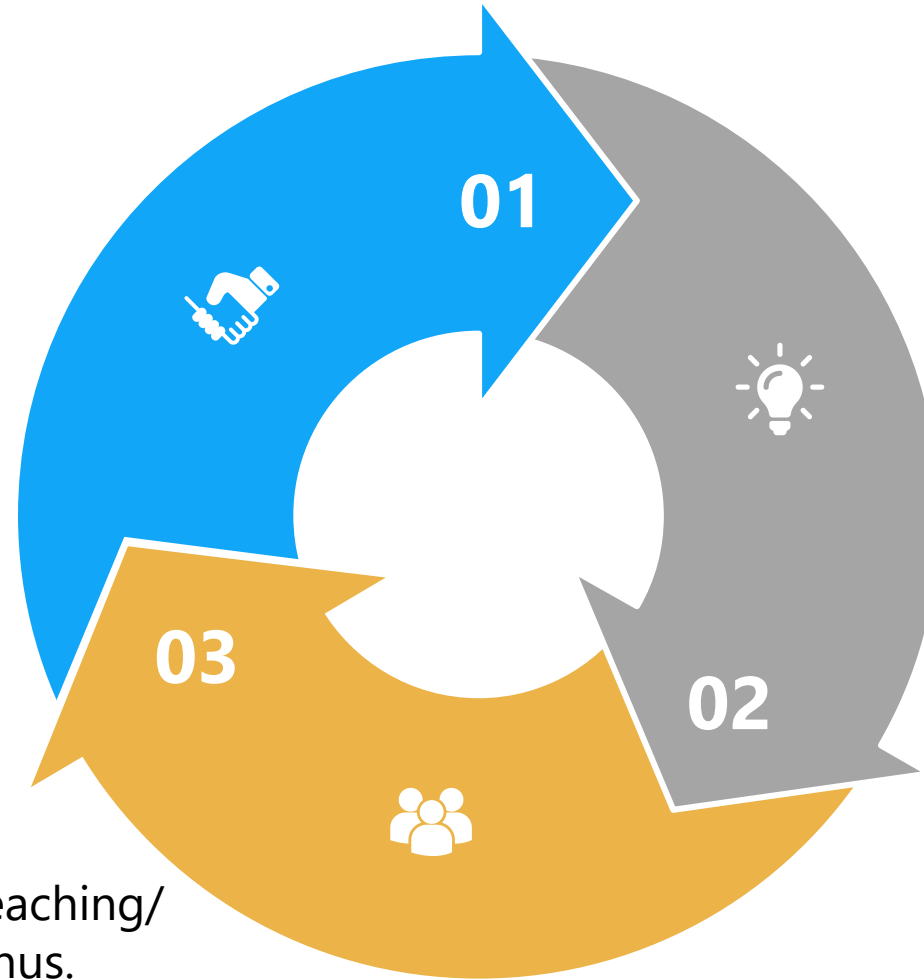
Passion

Yes, there are plenty of perks of being a professor, not to mention people calling you professor. Money is good but it shouldn't be your only motivation when pursuing a career as a university professor. Your passion will reflect on how much effort you put in your field work that will eventually contribute to the community.



What are the requirements to be a University Professor?

You'll need critical thinking and analytical skills, hard work, a never-ending passion in what you do and significant contributions in the field of your study to be qualified as a University Professor.

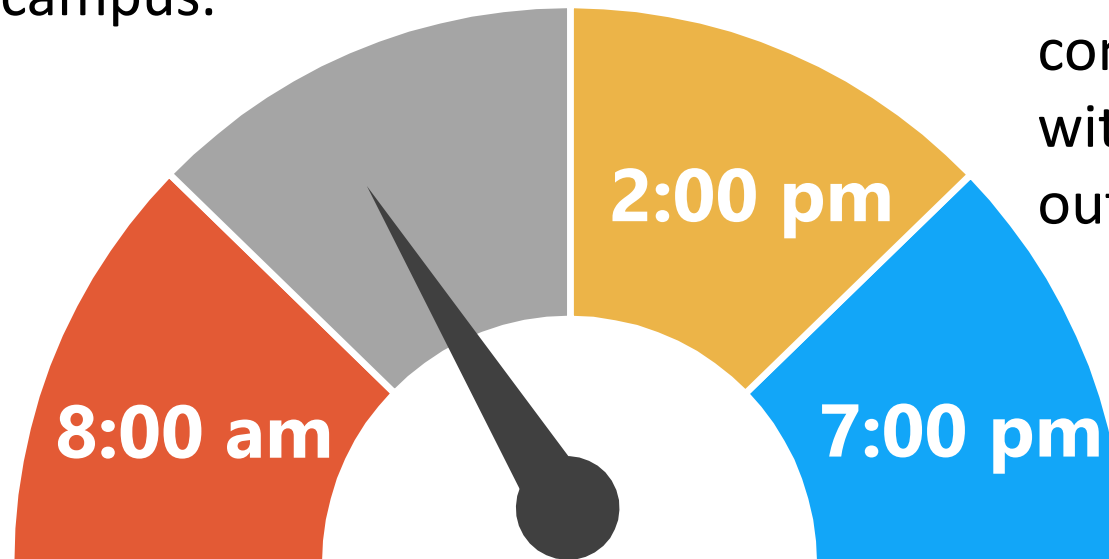


A PhD is also necessary because you are considered the most knowledgeable person in your field.

Experience in teaching/ services is a bonus.

What are the working hours of a University Professor?

- University Professors work long hours on weekdays and sometimes weekends, in and out of campus.
- Lots of time is spent on research, being in charge of a faculty and teaching students.
- Involvement with committees, organizations within UiTM and also outside.



HH:mm:ss

How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

01 PREVIOUS FUNDING

- A selection committee will expect that your previous performance as a researcher is an excellent predictor of your future



02

YOUR NICHE

- Nearly all scientists become professors in the field where they have worked and becoming an expert (say last 10 years)
- Defining your niche is therefore extremely important to stay healthy and enjoy your work.
- Choosing a niche consciously is therefore a big advantage and may show your leadership skills.
- However, avoid a niche which is too small because this may limit your possibilities to get funding.

How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

03

FIRST AND LAST AUTHOR PUBLICATIONS

- Apart from grant money and a well-selected niche, the most important parameter to pursue a career in academia is your publication list.
- In sciences and related domains the impact factors of your first and last author publications are still the most important single parameter to judge your “scientific excellence
- In selection committees, impact factors and H-indices can be easily compared between candidates and have a strong impact in most institutions. To qualify for professorship positions you must develop a conscious publication strategy.
- Briefly, a list of 2 or more first author publications with high impact factor ideally generated in two different labs, dramatically increases your chances to become a professor.



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

04

TEACHING

- Teaching experiences are an important parameter to become a professor as well.
- Teaching experience is a necessity because most professors spend a considerable part of their work time on teaching activities.
- Candidates without teaching experiences may only be selected for professorships which focus exclusively on research.
- However, these positions are very rare and attract normally a huge number of scientists with mind-boggling publication lists.



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

05

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY AND EXPOSURE

- Most research institutions highly value international experiences – and for good reasons: a scientist who has experienced diversity and the culture of other laboratories, with different leadership styles and cultural challenges normally develops a much broader view on science and understands better the challenges that young foreigners face while working in his/her lab
- Working abroad is likely to increase your resilience, agility, stress resistance, improves your ability to solve problems and to improvise and may broaden your international network.



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

06

INTERSECTORAL MOBILITY AND EXPOSURE TO INDUSTRY

- Work experience in the industry is mostly considered a big plus in most institutions.
- These candidates normally have a broader view on decision making processes in the industry, can communicate better with industry collaborators and may raise industry money more easily.



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

07

INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AND NETWORK

- This parameter is related to the niche you have chosen. A selection committee will analyze whether you have collaborations with international partners (thus, co-authorships on the same paper, joint grant proposals or joint patents).
- It is also important if you are embedded in bigger networks in the field such as being a member of big research consortia or having administrative functions such as being the treasurer of a scientific society etc.
- The number of invited talks or being session chair at scientific meetings are also noteworthy parameters because these invitations are often linked to networking activities and are also interpreted as scientific independence (see below).



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?

08

VISION, LEADERSHIP AND SCIENTIFIC INDEPENDENCE

- Having a complex and well-elaborated concept about your future research plans is one of the most important elements to convince a selection committee that you are a competent candidate for a professorship position.
- The candidates have to convince the committee that they have a clear idea about their future research line, on how to raise grant money and on how to build and lead a strong research team including some experience in recruiting staff members.
- Thus, having developed important leadership skills such as team building, recruiting the right people (PhD students, postdocs) and handling conflicts is a big plus.



How to Become a Professor?

What Qualifications, Skills and Experiences Do I Need to Become a Professor?



09

PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

- Participating in academic administration can be a plus but can also be very distracting.
- Having these experiences make it easier to integrate the new professor in the existing academic staff

References

- <https://smartsciencecareer.com/>
- <https://www.reed.co.uk/>
- <https://inomics.com/>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/>

Thank You