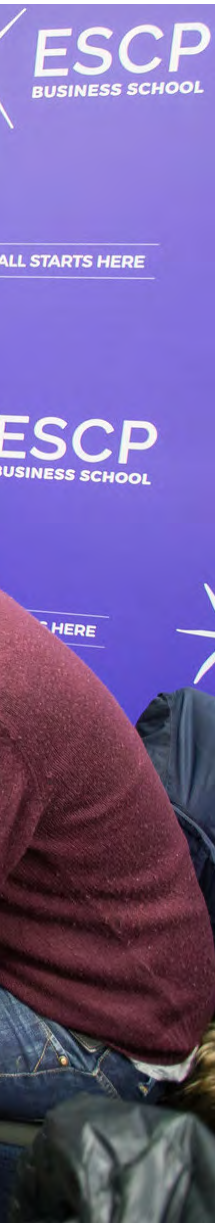
# The virtuous circle of specialisation and career evolution

Offering faculty better recognition and rewarding them for their actual contributions and for what they are passionate about, by **Valérie Moatti**

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Business schools are human capital-intensive institutions, and faculty represents one of their core assets. With increasing competition and demand for excellence within education, transformation of teaching formats and higher pressure on research output, business schools have invested heavily in faculty. Experience shows that faculty motivation is at the core of the quality of business schools as well as of student satisfaction (Rashidi, Zaki & Jalbani, 2016)

The market for faculty talents, and specifically top research profiles, has become fully international and very competitive. Starting salaries in the leading worldwide business schools can be significantly over 100K€/year even in Europe and much higher in the US and in Asia, with teaching loads less than 100 or even 80 hours per year. While starting salaries keep growing, opportunities for pay rises within a given business school are rare. As a result, seasoned professors with strong track records in highly ranked publications, are regularly headhunted by competitive business schools offering very attractive packages and it is becoming difficult, if not impossible, for some business schools to match such external offers.

In this context, today it is more challenging than ever for deans to attract, retain and motivate talents and fully involve them in the development and evolution of a business school. It is also difficult for deans to build a sustainable model when most of their business (development and management of programmes, teaching and teaching innovation, supervision and coaching of students, etc.) relies on other types of resources, less committed to highly ranked publications but eager to invest their time and energy in innovative quality teaching, designing outstanding programmes, coaching and taking care of students. While a few exceptional professors are capable of doing everything simultaneously, this is very rare and often leads to distressful situations such as tiredness, dissatisfaction or even burn-out. Overall it is very difficult to be excellent on all fronts (research, teaching and management) simultaneously. Rather, priorities and focus often evolve over time for each faculty member (Harvey et al. 2006). An assistant professor with a tenure-track position will usually prioritise intensive research activity. This may well change ten or fifteen years later. In some business schools, the career path is formalised with evolving expectations at different stages. For example, in some institutions, bringing funding to the school and developing outreach become key priorities for Full Professors as soon as they get promoted. Other business schools are creating or formally identifying different categories of faculty. In this case, the faculty is split into distinct groups, often defined by different cultures, backgrounds and behaviours. Whatever the specific context or the system in place, fairly managing the different types of profiles, their career evolution, their preferences and competences over time is difficult.

At ESCP, we believe excellence and motivation are the keywords. We are also convinced that faculty perform and feel better when they can focus on what they are good at. Last but not least, we have a strong collegial culture with a valuable social glue. This is why we decided to design a new faculty management framework that will be able to: i) recognise different types of contributions and reward excellence whatever the field or activity; ii) attract and retain international talents; iii) facilitate the development and well-being of the faculty, and iv) enhance ESCP competitiveness and differentiation (among other methods, through further harmonisation of conditions across faculties in our five different European campuses – Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris and Turin).

The underlying principle is that complementary resources are needed and that faculty are more motivated and perform better when they focus on what they are best at. This also implies evolution across time as competencies and personal expectations are evolving with career development.

As ESCP, where culture is collegial and friendly, we started the project by collecting faculty feedback on the areas of improvement for faculty management. As the new elected faculty dean, I initiated this collaborative work with 15 volunteers

| | E | S | C | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teaching / year** | 150h | 100h | 180h | 260h |
| **Expectations in research / intellectual contributions in 3 years** | 2 PRJ articles (at leas one B*) | Alpha* and A+* publications (2) | Impactful business publications including at least 1 PRJ | Teaching cases, Mooc, textbook, published teaching material or innovation |
| **Citizenship** | Contribution to student recruitment, supervision as well as responsibility for coordination | Contribution to student recruitment, supervision as well as responsibility for coordination | Contribution to student recruitment, supervision as well as responsibility for coordination | Contribution to student recruitment, supervision as well as responsibility for coordination |

within the faculty representing all campuses, academic departments, profiles and generations. After a short 'diagnosis', we collectively designed the vision and mission of the faculty and shared it with the full faculty before finalisation. Our resulting shared vision is: "A united and fulfilled faculty that drives the school's leadership to impact business and society in a sustainable way". We also identified key priorities for the coming three years at the faculty level and voted to decide on the very first priority which appeared to be "better recognise different types of contributions".

With this as a basis, we agreed on the principle of revising our existing egalitarian model of faculty management (with a unique teaching load requirement for all, and research expectations mainly measured according to the number of working days) to enhance excellence and well-being while preserving our culture of inclusivity and collegiality. We decided to design a framework that will allow flexibility of time management between activities based on profile, personal preferences and career path. Such a framework should also clarify expectations for different types of contributions relative to chosen profile.

The chosen framework, internally called "My ESCP", and elaborated through iterative collaborative processes involving all faculties from different campuses and different academic departments, offers four alternative "paths", defined through ESCP initials:

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1. **E**, standing for "Equilibrium": this path is very close to the existing unique model and fits perfectly for faculty members who wish to balance their investment in different activities (teaching, research and service to the institution). It is therefore the default path.
2. **S**, standing for "Scientific": this path is specifically designed for research lovers who aim high in research having demonstrated their ability to publish regularly at the highest level. This path also helps to maintain competitiveness for research profiles as it comes with a yearly bonus providing research output remains at the expected level.
3. **C**, standing for "Corporate": Faculty suited to executive education, high visibility among executives and larger audiences, therefore bringing outreach for the school.
4. **P**, standing for "Pedagogical": Faculty most focused on teaching and teaching innovation.

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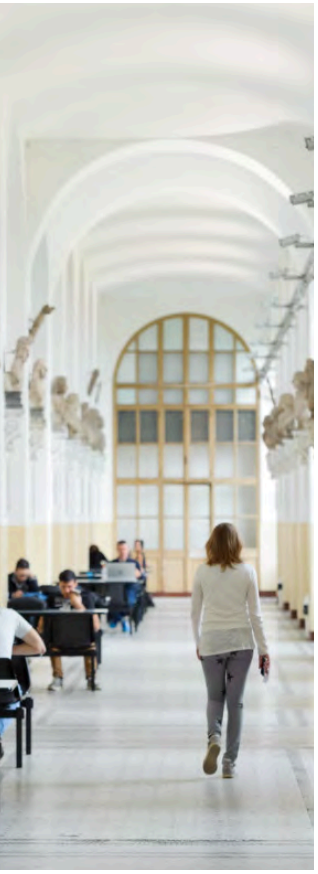
The ESCP faculty evaluation committee – called the EFAC (European Faculty Advisory Committee, made up of 11 elected colleagues representing the faculty, the Associate Dean for Research and the Dean of Faculty



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Whatever the path, a faculty member is expected to contribute to teaching and educating future leaders (core part of the mission of ESCP), to intellectual output and what we call "citizenship", i.e., a concrete contribution to the business school service (supervision of students, management of courses and programmes, participation in committees and task forces, student recruitment interviews, etc.). What differs from one path to another is the weight of these different activities and therefore expectations in terms of performance for every activity. As digital and innovative teaching is increasingly at the forefront, we pay specific attention to this, specifically for C and P, but also E paths. Additionally, we decided that for the S path, to replace our variable remuneration system – including our bonus policy for publication but also bonuses for responsibilities – with a significant bonus paid upfront to encourage faculty to spend their time on ambitious research projects rather than looking for other sources of revenue. This principle also helped to make our financial package more competitive for top research profiles.

Interestingly, our objective was not to build categories of professors with an implicit hierarchy but rather to help everyone to position themselves on a path where they can blossom over the next 3 years. Mobility between paths is embedded into the model and we have already experienced transitions from one path to another. For example, one of our P (teaching) profiles demonstrated the ability to develop strong relationships and visibility in the business world as well as publishing impactful papers. As a result, he move to the C path. Conversely, another colleague on the E path (our default previous model) decided to move to the P path because he did not want to conduct academic research anymore. Both of them are now feeling much better on their new paths. In the future, we can envisage a young colleague spending 10 years on the S path in order to focus on their research, later switching to C to develop more connections within the business world, enhancing a broader visibility.

The ESCP faculty evaluation committee – called the EFAC (European Faculty Advisory Committee, made up of 11 elected colleagues representing the faculty, the Associate Dean for Research and the Dean of Faculty also elected by the faculty and headed by the Dean of the School) –meets every year to assess the performance of each faculty member and decide on tenure, promotion, sabbaticals, etc. My ESCP was implemented in September 2020 as a test for volunteering faculty. About one third of the faculty has already applied and EFAC is following up those applications and will monitor the situation closely in the coming years. EFAC is also adjusting its current promotion policy to fit with the different paths. The new framework will also guide future recruitment and helps us clarify where we want to go. The first feedback is very positive as it clarifies objectives for the colleagues concerned. We are confident that the framework will bring better rewards for all faculty, whatever their profile, and therefore consolidate our collective project of aiming at excellence and well-being. It will also help us to enhance our competitiveness and strengthen our inclusive and collegial culture at ESCP.

Finally, these ESCP examples show that all business schools are facing similar pressures and challenges. However, each of them has to find its own way given their specific culture and context. The future will probably confirm the value of such an inclusive and innovative framework.

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**About the Author**

*Valérie Moatti is Professor and Dean of Faculty at ESCP Business School*

**Sources**

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