

FACULTY Merit Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2024

PURPOSE

Merit adjustments, along with other initiatives such as training programs and educational benefits, support UTRGV's talent management strategy designed to attract and retain the best, most highly qualified and most highly motivated faculty.

TIMELINE

October 25, 2023	Faculty merit pool listings and templates are made available
November 9, 2023	Completed merit materials are due to the Office of the Provost/SOM/SOPM Dean's Office
November 16, 2023	Completed merit materials due to HR for review no later than this date (including division head review)
November 28, 2023	Merit materials returned to the division offices by HR
December 1, 2023	Effective date for merit
January 2, 2024	Merit pay increase included in paycheck

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA ^{i ii iii iv v}

Merit shall be awarded in accordance with merit policies of respective colleges; ***across the board merit increases will not be approved.***

To be considered for merit, faculty members must:

- Have been hired into a benefits-eligible tenured or tenure-track position or multi-year budgeted non-tenure track position (e.g., Professor of Practice, Clinical Faculty, or Lecturer appointment) in an academic or health college (excluding SOM/SOPM) with an appointment date on or before November 1, 2022
- Have been hired into a benefits-eligible one-year SOM/SOPM Faculty appointment, assistant professor of [specialty] or higher, on or before November 1, 2022
- Have completed their annual outside activities and interest disclosure and required compliance trainings required through UTRGV
- Have an annual faculty evaluation with an overall rating of Meets or Exceeds Expectation for the 2022-2023 academic year
- Have no formal disciplinary action in their faculty file since September 1, 2022, and have no formal disciplinary action that precludes consideration for the relevant time period
- Faculty who are on approved leave (i.e., FDL, FMLA) are eligible to receive merit if all other criteria are met.

- Non-eligible faculty:
 - Short-term non-tenure track faculty
 - Visiting faculty appointments

- Adjunct faculty on a semester appointment basis
- Community/Volunteer faculty (SOM)

MERIT POOLS / METHODOLOGY

The Planning & Analysis and HR Offices will compute the merit pools for each division based on 2% of the total of all **July 1, 2023** salaries for all budgeted, filled positions within a department up to a maximum of \$6,000 per position. These pools will be distributed by the division head to each college/school for distribution according to the approved merit distribution methodologies adopted by each college/school.

MERIT DISTRIBUTION

- Each college/school has the responsibility to establish their award criteria and methodologies as long as those criteria do not conflict with the guidelines outlined in this document.
- Each college/school is responsible for working within their faculty governance structures to develop a transparent methodology for merit distributions.
- Colleges/schools are also required to provide the method in which the approved merit distribution process is to be communicated with their faculty in advance of merit distributions.
- The division head will review and approve the criteria established at each college/school unit to ensure a merit distribution that is fair, equitable and free of disparate impact.

APPROVAL

Merit awards for faculty must be recommended by each employee's supervisor and processed through the chain of command for consideration of approval by the dean and division head.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS REQUIRED ^{vi}

Faculty must adhere to guidelines and timelines for the annual review process and evaluation scores must be on file with the division head. If an evaluation is not completed during the established timelines, faculty will not be eligible for merit consideration. Only faculty meeting the established performance evaluation criteria will be eligible for a merit. For information on the faculty annual review process, refer to the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) ADM 06-502, 06-503, and 06-504.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Supervisors must exercise caution in handling and disclosing merit award recommendations; until final approval by the President, recommendations are subject to change or even retraction.

MAXIMUM ADJUSTMENT

Each merit award is limited to a maximum of 4% of a faculty member's base salary rate in effect as of July 1, 2023, but cannot exceed 4% or \$6,000, if 4% exceeds \$6,000. In very limited cases a division head in consultation with the VP of HR and Talent Development may recommend, based on compelling justification, an award in excess of the maximum. Such recommendations will require the approval of the appropriate division head and VP of HR and Talent Development. However, no unit or division may recommend an amount that would exceed their merit pool.

RESTRICTED AND OTHER SELF-FUNDED ACCOUNTS

Managers of restricted and other self-funded accounts, like all other areas of the institution, should follow the guidelines established by this document. Questions regarding restricted accounts may be directed to Suelema Gonzalez, Director of Grants and Contracts, at (956) 882-7716.

ADJUSTMENTS AFTER FINALIZATION OF THE PROCESS

Changes after the process is finalized will typically not be allowed. An example of a change that would not be allowed is redistribution of merit amounts due to employee departures. Limited post-process adjustments may be considered and typically involve an extraordinary circumstance and require the approval of the President.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Merit recommendations shall be submitted following the timeline provided above via secure email through the organizational chain of command on the forms provided. After the data is processed, a listing will be distributed to the Office of the Provost/SOM/SOPM Dean's Office.

QUESTIONS?

Primary contact and issue resolution should be through the organizational chain of command. However, the following individuals in the Office of the Provost, SOM, and HR offices are available for assistance.

Office of the Provost Contact:

David Granado, Deputy to the Provost and
Senior VP for Academic Affairs
(956) 665-2111
david.granado@utrgv.edu

School of Medicine Human Resources

Contact:

Vera Ruiz, Director HR, SOM
(956) 296-1516
Vera.Ruiz@utrgv.edu

Human Resources Contact:

Kristina Chavez, Director Compensation and
Talent Acquisition
Human Resources (Compensation and Merit
questions)
(956) 665-5395
Kristina.Chavez@utrgv.edu

ⁱ Eligible employees are *regular* permanent, benefits-eligible employees. This excludes waged, work-study and others who are not benefits-eligible.

ⁱⁱ UT System Operating Budget Instructions for FY 2024: Consistent with the Policies, it is expected that any pools for FY 2024 salary increases for merit, equity or other reasons are included in the Operating Budget. Funds set aside for merit increases and promotions are to be allocated within the Detail Budget to the Function Level (i.e., Instruction, Academic Support, Research, Institutional Support, etc.). Institutions may allocate salary pools to a lower level such as college or department, if desired. It is expected that merit salary increases will be awarded only on September 1, 2023, unless prior approval has been received from UT System Administration. This would have been discussed in the Budget Goals and Priorities discussion and reported with the Compensation Plan.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eighty-eighth Legislature General Appropriations Act for the 2024-25 Biennium; Article III-272, sec. 4 . *Merit Authorization*. “It is expressly provided that institutional administrators may grant merit salary increases to employees whose job performance and productivity is consistently above that normally expected or required”. Sec. 5 -*Merit Requirement for Faculty and Faculty Equivalent Employees of Institutions and Agencies of Higher Education*. “Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act, salary increases for faculty or faculty equivalent employees of institutions of higher education shall be awarded on the basis of merit and performance in accepted activities. This shall not be interpreted so as to preclude salary adjustment designed to avoid salary inequities”.

^{iv} Board of Regents Budget Preparation Policies, Fiscal Year 2024: Merit Increases and Promotions - Institutions should consider available resources and resolution of any major salary inequities when implementing merit salary increases for faculty and staff. As defined in Texas Education Code Section 51.962, an employee must have been employed by the institution for the six months immediately preceding the effective date of the increase to be eligible for a merit increase, and at least six months must have elapsed since the employee's last merit salary increase. These limitations also apply to one-time merit payments. Merit increases or advances in rank for faculty are to be on the basis of teaching effectiveness, research, and public service. Merit increases or promotions for administrative and professional staff and classified staff are to be based on evaluation of performance in areas appropriate to work assignments. In accordance with Regent's Rules and Regulations, performance appraisals are to be conducted annually for all employees of the U. T. System. The U. T. System Administration Office of Talent and Innovation will issue specific guidance related to this requirement.

^v Texas Education Code Sec. 51.962. MERIT SALARY INCREASES. (a) An institution of higher education as defined by Section 61.003 may grant merit salary increases, including one-time merit payments, to employees described by this section.

(b) A merit salary increase made under this section is compensation for purposes of Chapter 659, Government Code, and salary and wages and member compensation for purposes of Title 8, Government Code.

(c) An institution of higher education may pay merit salary increases under this section from any funds.

(d) Before awarding a merit salary increase under this section, an institution of higher education must adopt criteria for the granting of merit salary increases.

(e) To be eligible for a merit salary increase under this section, an employee must have been employed by the institution of higher education for the six months immediately preceding the effective date of the increase and at least six months must have elapsed since the employee's last merit salary increase.

(f) This subsection applies to an employee employed by the institution of higher education for more than six months. The requirement that six months elapse between merit salary increases prescribed by Subsection (e) does not apply to a one-time merit payment if the chief administrative officer of the institution of higher education determines in writing that the one-time merit payment is made in relation to the employee's performance during a natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstance.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 118, Sec. 2.02, eff. Sept. 1, 2001. Amended by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. [1241](#), Sec. 1, eff. June 19, 2009.

^{vi} HOP ADM 06-502: D.8.a and b: “The outcome of each faculty member's annual performance evaluation will be used in determining the amount of merit awarded to the faculty member ...”, “To be eligible for merit, faculty must receive “exceeds” or “meets” expectations in the overall evaluation result.” HOP ADM 06-503: D.7.a: “The outcome of each faculty member’s overall annual performance evaluations will be used in determining eligibility for a merit pay increase, should a merit pay increase be available. To be eligible for a merit pay increase, faculty must be in good standing, meet or exceed expectations, and meet the requirements outlined in the applicable merit guidelines.” HOP ADM 06-504 D.4.h: “The outcome of each faculty member’s overall annual performance evaluations will be used in determining eligibility for a merit pay increase, should a merit pay increase be available. To be eligible for a merit pay increase, faculty must be in good standing, meet or exceed expectations, and meet the requirements outlined in the applicable merit guidelines.”