

FACULTY Merit Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2027

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 5, 2026	Faculty merit pool listings and templates are made available to Division
October 9, 2026	Deadline to complete all required trainings, evaluations and reporting
October 15, 2026	Completed merit materials are due to the Office of the Provost/EVP of Health Affairs
October 20, 2026	Completed merit materials due to HR for review no later than this date (including division head review)
October 26, 2026	Merit materials returned to the division offices by HR
November 1, 2026	Effective date for merit
December 1, 2026	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/SOO) with an appointment date on or before November 1, 2025.
- Have been hired into a benefits-eligible one-year SOM/SOPM/SOO Faculty appointment, assistant professor of [specialty] or higher, on or before November 1, 2025.
- Have completed their annual outside activities and interest disclosure and required compliance trainings through UTRGV no later than October 9, 2026.
- Have an annual faculty evaluation with an overall rating of Meets or Exceeds Expectation for the 2025-2026 academic year.
- Have no formal disciplinary action in their faculty file since September 1, 2025, 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 (Health Affairs)
- **Employees in a faculty title who received an increase in pay due to a Hiring Action, Promotion and Tenure, Equity / Market or other salary adjustment effective March 1, 2026 and later, and where the adjustment exceeds 5% will not be eligible for merit consideration. These positions will not generate a merit pool contribution. In future merit cycles, a March 1 eligibility cutoff date will be applied for similar salary adjustments.**

Note: Eligibility for merit does not guarantee an award. Future merit award cycles will be contingent upon institutional approval and funding availability.

MERIT POOLS / METHODOLOGY

The Planning & Analysis and HR Offices will compute the merit pools for each division based on 1% of the total of all **July 1, 2026**, salaries for all budgeted, filled positions within a department up to a maximum of \$3,000 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 developing a transparent methodology for merit distributions in collaboration with their department/division leadership.
- 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 should be recommended by each employee's department head/dean 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.

MINIMUM ADJUSTMENT

Each eligible employee deemed meritorious should be awarded a minimum merit of \$600 per year. Note that this minimum adjustment is not guaranteed based on satisfactory performance alone, performance must be deemed meritorious.

MAXIMUM ADJUSTMENT

Each merit award is limited to a maximum of 2% of a faculty member's base salary rate in effect as of July 1, 2026, but cannot exceed \$3,000 per year. In very limited cases a division head in consultation with the VP of HR 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. 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. Restricted and self-funded activities are required to cover the cost of merit awards as there is no subsidy from institutional funding.

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/EVP of Health Affairs.

QUESTIONS?

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

Office of the Provost Contact:

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

Health Affairs Human Resources Contact:

Jessica Garces, Employee Relations Mgr,
HA
Health Affairs questions
(956) 296-1561
jessica.garces@utrgv.edu

Human Resources Contact:

Kristina Chavez, Sr. Associate VP HR
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 2026: Consistent with the Policies, it is expected that any pools for FY 2027 salary increases for merit, equity or other reasons are included in the Operating Budget. Funds set aside for compensation increases should 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.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eighty-eighth Legislature General Appropriations Act for the 2026-27 Biennium; Article III-288, sec. 5, subs. 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”. Subs. 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 2027: 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 established by 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 their professional responsibilities in teaching effectiveness, research, public service, patient care, and administration. 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.

^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} Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) ADM 04-504, D.2.m: “Salary increases related to promotions and merit awards will require that a current and satisfactory appraisal be on file with the Office of Human Resources”. 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.”