

Merit Memo Part One: Annual Merit Evaluation
For all CAS Professorial Faculty
March 22, 2024

It is time to begin work on the annual evaluation and merit exercise for professorial faculty (please note that performance evaluation instructions for full-time lecturers are now outlined in a separate memo). This is a two-part process that includes: 1) annual evaluation of faculty contributions during 2023, and 2) allocation of the merit pool to professorial faculty in the form of salary increases that become effective Sept. 1.

This memorandum addresses the first part of this process by laying out the principles that should guide departmental and programmatic evaluation of faculty members. The second part of the process, which takes into account considerations of equity and market forces, is addressed in a separate communication to chairs and directors.

This memo is posted on the CAS website. All faculty should be familiar with its contents, so they understand the norms and structure of this process. Please contact Richard Wright or your appropriate divisional Associate Dean for further information or assistance.

General principles

Our annual review is based on peer evaluation of faculty work over the past calendar year and should be framed by these general principles:

The commitment to merit-based salaries for professorial faculty reflects the fundamental reality that our excellence depends on hiring, rewarding, and retaining the best faculty – those who contribute most successfully to the University’s missions of research and education. Through the merit process we recognize those who, through their work, have had a significant impact on our students, the University, their scholarly field, and the larger world. Merit evaluation, while driven by accomplishments during the most recent review period, must also reflect long-term and continuing contributions.

Each unit should establish an open, transparent, and fair means of evaluating the relative merits of its individual faculty members. It is good practice to involve a faculty committee, either appointed by the Chair or elected by the faculty, to assist with evaluation, to avoid bias and allow development of departmental norms about judging relative merit, and to provide annual merit evaluation feedback to each faculty member. In any case, the faculty should be fully informed of the process used by the unit.

Each faculty member should receive notification of an evaluation by the end of the spring semester. The annual evaluation provides an opportunity to recognize faculty members' outstanding performance and to advise them on areas in need of improvement.

Although the approach may differ by unit, this notification should at a minimum include the faculty member's relative rating (e.g., below average, average, above average) and a summary of the rationale referenced below; it does not need to include a numerical rating. Although it is best practice for the chair or members of the departmental review committee to meet with the faculty member, the department may elect to hold this meeting after new salaries are announced.

Guidelines for evaluation of 2023 activities:

Departments and programs are responsible for creating and communicating clear norms and practices about typical annual expectations, as well as grounds for merit assessment for faculty who are outside the tenure track, including practitioner faculty and faculty whose positions do not include expectations about research.

Assessment must be based on evidence rather than on general impressions. Evaluations should draw on the Faculty Annual Report and curriculum vitae as well as other available documentation, such as peer and student teaching evaluations; evidence of the impact of scholarly work, such as reviews of publications or proposals; professional honors; and evidence of the quality of service. Because merit evaluations are based on documentation, faculty who do not complete a FAR are normally not eligible for merit increases.

Please note that faculty had the option to comment on how the pandemic impacted their work during 2023 on their Faculty Annual Report; merit review committees should discuss whether and how to factor the information in these statements into their evaluation of each faculty member and make sure that the chair is aware of the approach taken. In the process of assigning dollar raises based on the merit scores, the chair will have an additional opportunity to consider these impact statements (see the Part Two memo to Chairs and Directors).

Departments and programs should avoid counting and rewarding the same work multiple times. The major credit for a publication should be given for the year in which the actual publication occurred, not in advance while it is "in press." Departments and programs should distinguish clearly between works they regard as original works of scholarship, other scholarly activities, and other kinds of intellectual and creative work and publication.

Although the evaluation originates in a faculty member's home department or program, faculty should be evaluated on the basis of their full range of professional contributions regardless of whether they take place specifically in the home department or program, in another department or program, or in the College or wider University. Departments and programs should request

input (including course evaluations) from other units that have had an opportunity to observe or benefit from the contributions of their faculty. The chairs and directors of those programs and departments, in turn, should provide brief evaluations of these contributions to the faculty member's home department or program.

Review of faculty on leave/sabbatical

Below is guidance on how to evaluate faculty members on various types of leaves of absence and/or sabbatical. Faculty should not be penalized for being on leave of any sort.

- For faculty on sabbatical or academic leave of absence: Most faculty are expected to focus on their own research/scholarship during sabbatical and it is therefore reasonable to emphasize these activities and put lower weight on teaching and service when evaluating a faculty member who had sabbatical in the past year.
- For faculty members on a medical leave or non-academic unpaid leave of absence: expand the evaluative period to a longer timeframe. Consider whether their overall merit was below, at or above average before they went on leave. Perhaps look at performance over a two-year timeframe.
- Chairs should always consult with Associate Deans of the Faculty if they have difficulty making an assessment.

Criteria for evaluation

Annual evaluation should include the following criteria, applied as appropriate given expectations based on the individual's discipline(s) and department/program, job title and expectations, rank and time in rank, and other institutional roles and obligations:

- Contributions to teaching and curriculum development, including teaching effectiveness, number of students taught, curricular and pedagogical innovation, contribution to core teaching needs both inside the department and across the College and University;
- Service to the programs and administrative work of the University other than teaching and research (including service outside the department on College and University assignments);
- Professional recognition, honors, and awards;
- Advising, counseling, and mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students;

- Research and other scholarly productivity, as evidenced by both published work and significant progress toward publication;
- Professional service and contributions beyond the University;
- Success in generating external funding in support of research or other programs;
- Other contributions and activities as appropriate, including those called out for specific focus by the Provost.

These criteria are not weighted equally in the annual evaluation process. Departments and programs are asked to submit an explanation of their processes, indicating the weight assigned to each component.

Evaluation blurbs and ratings

Every faculty member's evaluation will include a rating and a brief statement of the rationale for the rating. The rationale and these ratings should be used to give meaningful feedback to faculty for the purposes of recognizing strength and encouraging improvement, where needed:

1. **Underperforming.** Did not fulfill the obligations of the position, inadequate or low-quality teaching, scholarship, and/or professional service this year. Or did not fill out a FAR.
2. **Below average.** Performance in teaching, scholarship, and/or professional service this year was somewhat below the departmental norm.
3. **Average.** Performance in teaching, scholarship, and professional service this year was around the norm for the department.
4. **Above average.** Performance in teaching, scholarship, and/or professional service was above the departmental norm this year.
5. **Outstanding.** Extraordinary performance and/or recognition.

Typically, a departmental review committee will assign one of the above ratings to each faculty member and provide a brief rationale for that ranking to the Chair or Director. In the second step of this process, the Chair will have an opportunity to add any additional considerations related to equity, market factors, or retention for professorial faculty.

Cc: CAS Department/Program Administrators
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