

Merit Evaluation and Allocation Policies and Procedures

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to communicate to all Ethnic Studies faculty the department's process for evaluating merit scores and allocating merit increases, including how decisions are made and who makes those decisions. This document also includes similar information on the process and decisions for addressing faculty salary compression and equity issues. As such, this document seeks alignment with the CU Boulder Academic Affairs Policy on Salary Equity (Spring 2015)¹ and the CU Boulder Faculty Salary Procedures Working Group Report (Spring 2023),² both of which stress that academic units should strive for transparency and fairness in carrying out this process.

This is a living document and can be revisited anytime. All DES faculty are encouraged to review this document, including the referenced University policies and reports herein, and to voice their opinions on the process to their colleagues on the Ex Comm for discussion and possible revision in the future.

II. What Is Merit and What Does the Process Entail?

According to the Faculty Affairs [website](#) on Annual Merit Evaluation:

Salary adjustments for faculty are made annually contingent on available funds. For teaching faculty, tenure-track, and tenured faculty, these adjustments generally take effect January 1. Recommendations for merit increases are to be determined by the supervising administrator in consultation with colleagues in the primary academic unit as defined by unit rules and college/school guidelines.

Regental policy requires that each primary unit develop explicit statements for criteria for assessing annual merit. These statements must be in writing and must be available to faculty. New faculty members should be provided a copy of their unit's evaluation criteria as early in their first year of employment as is practical. The criteria for assessing annual merit adjustments are to include measures of each faculty member's contribution to the teaching, scholarly and creative work, and leadership and service missions of the primary unit and the University. Effort in each of these areas is to be weighted according to the workload assignment for the individual faculty member.

There are two main components of the merit process: 1) Evaluation, and 2) Allocation, explained

¹ See: <https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/faculty-personnel-actions-career-milestones/evaluation-compensation/salary-equity>

² See: <https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/faculty-personnel-actions-career-milestones/evaluation-compensation/faculty-salary-procedures>

further below.

III. Merit Evaluation

Merit evaluation is conducted by the department's Executive Committee ("Ex Comm"), which, per our bylaws, is composed of five faculty members: The Chair, the two Associate Chairs, and two additional faculty members designated by the Chair. The evaluation process begins soon after all Faculty Reports of Professional Activities ("FRPAs") are submitted on February 1 each year. These reports are completed by each faculty member, and represent their scholarly work, teaching, and professional / community service conducted in the prior *calendar* year (not academic year). As such, faculty members who are new to the department may not have much to report in their first FRPA regarding their teaching and service at CU Boulder, which is expected and normal. CU Boulder Faculty Affairs sends out reminders to all faculty at the start of the calendar year, along with links for helpful tips and instructions on completing the FRPA. Pre-tenure faculty are encouraged to consult with their faculty mentor or the department Chair if they have questions about how to effectively complete their FRPA.

Upon receiving all completed and submitted faculty FRPAs, the department Program Manager compiles the documents, along with faculty curriculum vitas (CVs, submitted by each faculty member using the same portal as the FRPA) and Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQs, provided by central campus administration) from the relevant academic semesters. The Program Manager also provides faculty merit evaluation forms from the previous year (if applicable) so that reviewers can reference more than one year of professional activities. This is pursuant to Faculty Affairs' recommendation that: "to moderate extreme variation in merit assessment year-to-year due to variable achievement beyond the faculty member's direct control, some units combine data from the year's annual evaluation with data from one or more previous years."³

The Chair then proposes the timeline for the review process in communication with the Program Manager and Ex Comm (noting the central campus deadline) and assigns each member of Ex Comm a batch of reviews, keeping in mind issues of rank. Generally, higher-ranked faculty members will receive more review assignments than lower-ranked faculty members; also, the Chair should consider higher-ranked faculty for reviewing other faculty at or below their rank, although this may not always be possible due to the composition of the Ex Comm and the ranks represented therein. Note: Although a faculty member on Ex Comm may need to review another faculty member's FRPA at their own rank, they should *not* be assigned to review a faculty member above their rank.

During the review meeting, members of Ex Comm discuss their reviews of all faculty FRPAs, FCQs, and the previous year's evaluation forms. To account for conflicts of interest, Ex Comm members recuse themselves from voting on their own review and on reviews of their spouses / partners (if applicable). Faculty members are assigned a score of 1-5 for each category (research / creative work, teaching, and service), which correspond to the following campus-wide assessment ratings:

³ From the CU Boulder Faculty Affairs Annual Merit Assessment website:
<https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/faculty-personnel-actions-career-milestones/evaluation-compensation/annual-merit-assessment>

5 - Outstanding

4 - Exceeding Expectations

3 - Meeting Expectations

2 - Below Expectations

1 - Fails to Meet Expectations

Each reviewer elucidates the rationale for their recommended scores in each category and is encouraged to be thorough in their assessment to provide useful information during the committee discussion of each faculty member's case. During the committee discussion, committee members may propose adjustments of each score using evidence from their own assessment of the faculty members' materials. Once the committee comes to an agreement on the scores in each section (teaching, research, and service), the overall score is calculated by averaging the scores and accounting for the "weight" of each section. An example of this calculation is presented below:

Faculty Member: Jane Smith

Rank: Associate Professor

Weighting: 40% Research, 40% Teaching, 20% Service

Scores:

Research	Teaching	Service	Weighted Composite (Overall) Score	Evaluation Rating
4	3	4	3.6*	Exceeding Expectations

$$* 4 \times .4 = 1.6$$

$$3 \times .4 = 1.2$$

$$4 \times .2 = 0.8$$

$$3.6 \text{ (rounded up to 4)}$$

In discussing and determining faculty members' scores, the Ex Comm considers the following for each section:

Research and Creative Works: For tenured and tenure-track faculty members, reviewers look for evidence of "excellence" in research and creative works as demonstrated by peer-reviewed publications (books, articles, and book chapters), book contracts with scholarly presses, national awards, refereed external funding for original research (grants and fellowships), and other forms of peer-reviewed creative output as primary indicators. Generally, the publication of a single-authored book or the receipt of a major research grant or national fellowship within the review period is considered a significant scholarly accomplishment and is treated as "Outstanding," thus

equaling a score of 5. For faculty who primarily publish peer reviewed journal articles (as opposed to writing books), the Ex Comm will consider a substantial amount of full-length published journal articles within the review period as the equivalent to publishing a book. The publication of a single full-length, peer-reviewed sole-authored article or book chapter within the review period is generally treated as “Exceeding Expectations,” thus equaling a score of 4. A faculty member may also receive a 4 in this area for securing a scholarly book contract within the review period. Demonstrating steady progress on research and writing projects through works that are submitted or in press may prompt a score of 3, or “Meeting Expectations.” Publishing a book review (or numerous book reviews) also demonstrates that a faculty member is maintaining research productivity and contributing to their fields of study and may also prompt a score of 3. Of course, the Ex Comm will consider various combinations of all the above possible indicators of research activity in their deliberations and ultimate score designations.

The department encourages all faculty, especially pre-tenure faculty, to consult the department’s Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Guidelines document for further details and information on how evidence of research excellence may be demonstrated, including indicators of creative work and community-based research. The department also encourages all faculty to regularly consult with their faculty mentors (either assigned by the Chair or informally established), the Chair, and other senior department faculty regarding their research and scholarship activities and how to best present them in the FRPA to receive the fullest consideration by Ex Comm during the review process.

For tenured faculty, the Executive Committee looks for evidence of *ongoing* research excellence, in addition to a holistic assessment of the faculty member’s contribution through excellence in teaching and exemplary service to the Department, the College, the University, the field, and community engagements.

Teaching: Reviewers strive to assess multiple measures of teaching during their assessment of faculty in this area; however, by nature of the university system, the primary material for this assessment typically falls within Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQs). The department is aware of the documented bias that occurs in FCQs, especially along intersectional lines of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, immigration status, accent, skin color, and many other possible objects of student bias. Reviewers thus weigh their assessment of faculty FCQs with other evidence of teaching “excellence,” including and especially student mentoring. This can be demonstrated by serving as primary advisee for an Ethnic Studies graduate student, serving on student committees (both within and outside the department), serving on undergraduate honors theses committees (or as primary advisor), among other mentoring activities. The quality of these teaching activities may be demonstrated by, for example, successful student defenses (comprehensive exams, prospectuses, dissertations, honors theses), successful student grant or fellowship applications, student job placements, and even a record of meeting regularly with advisees and submitting the semesterly graduate advising agreement in a timely manner.

Please note that it is the faculty member’s responsibility to highlight these elements in the FRPA for reviewers to assess effectively. One area for highlighting activities that do not fall within the provided menu of options within the online FRPA form is the “Annual Activity Summary,”

which is a text box for narrating activities or highlighting major accomplishments (please note there is a character limit for this text box). For Teaching Professors who have different weightings (typically: 0% Research, 85% Teaching, 15% Service), reviewers will adjust their attention accordingly to teaching and service activities, although they will also take note of additional research activities that may warrant recognition.

Although teaching is more difficult to quantitatively assess, a faculty member may earn a score of 5 (“Outstanding”) if they receive a teaching award, successfully oversee the graduation and job placement of a graduate student or otherwise demonstrate a robust combination of excellent FCQ scores and other indicators of quality teaching and mentoring, as noted above. A faculty member may earn a score of 4 (“Exceeding Expectations”) if they indicate an exemplary record of teaching and mentoring, and they may receive a score of 3 (“Meeting Expectations”) if their teaching and mentoring is maintaining departmental pedagogical standards of sound instruction, regular student contact, and adequate mentoring practices.

Service: Reviewers evaluate service by considering the multiple arenas in which this work may be performed: department, campus, university, profession, and community. Generally, pre-tenure faculty and Teaching Professors are “protected” from performing an undue amount of service work in all arenas, thus reviewers take into account the importance of making steady progress toward tenure (for those on the tenure track, research and writing are emphasized) and in providing quality learning experiences for all students. However, such faculty can demonstrate their participation in the department community and their willingness to engage in important departmental functions by taking on reasonable amounts of service and highlighting this in their FRPA. This may include serving on committees (spread across department and other arenas mentioned above), and otherwise highlighting any community service (non-profit boards, initiatives, community-based projects, etc.) they have performed.

For tenured faculty who tend to carry a higher service load in all arenas, the Executive Committee may recognize extraordinary service commitments and score appropriately. This is especially salient regarding the significant labor for the Department Chair and Associate Chairs, as well as any other major administrative duties that benefit the campus community and/or profession (e.g., serving as Director of a major research center or in a significant officer role for a scholarly organization). Overall scores are also impacted by the campus-assigned adjusted weighting designated to university administrative positions (typically 20% Research, 20% Teaching, 60% Service).

Note: Receiving a score of 2 (“Below Expectations”) or 1 (“Fails to Meet Expectations”) in any area (research, teaching, or service), should send a message to the faculty member that the Ex Comm has made note of clear areas for improvement that the faculty member should begin to address immediately. If a faculty member should receive either score in any area, the department recommends they set up a meeting with their faculty mentor and/or the Chair to discuss steps they should take to address the area(s) of concern and to develop and implement a [Performance Improvement Agreement](#) (PIA). For pre-tenure faculty, this is especially important in planning for their tenure review. For tenured faculty, this is important for maintaining the quality of student experiences, department community and collegiality, and the department’s (and university’s) expectations for continued research productivity, as evaluated in future promotions

(if applicable) and the Post-Tenure Review (PTR) process.

It is important to stress that the *overall* merit score is what ultimately determines the merit raise. So, for example, if a faculty member achieves a significant goal in research (e.g., publishing a book), they must also have scored meritoriously in teaching and service to achieve an overall score of 5 (“outstanding”). In other words, if a faculty member achieves a significant accomplishment in research but fails to meet expectations in teaching and/or service, they will not likely achieve an *overall* score of 5. For more information on faculty evaluation, including grievances and appeals processes, see [Administrative Policy Statement 5008 – Faculty Performance Evaluations](#). Faculty must notify the department Chair within **ten days** of receiving their merit evaluation if they intend to appeal the assigned scores.

Following the review process and the designation of scores, faculty will receive via DocuSign two forms that communicate the results of the review and the rationale for arriving at them. The first form is titled “Annual Performance Rating Form for Faculty Members” (Appendix A) and indicates the faculty member’s *overall* score, per the calculations above. This form is a part of each faculty member’s annual evaluation file, and can be viewed in other evaluation scenarios, such as during reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure. The form also provides general comments that can help illuminate the faculty member’s performance assessment in each area (research, teaching, and service). The second form, titled “Annual Merit Evaluation: Advice and Comments” (Appendix B) is a confidential form that is only seen by the faculty member, the Program Manager, and the Ex Comm, and is a space for communicating areas where a faculty member may need to improve (if applicable). This document may not be necessary if a faculty member is excelling in all areas and no advice and comments are deemed necessary by the committee. Faculty will be asked to electronically sign the form(s) to acknowledge receipt. Signing the form indicates only that the rating has been discussed with the person rated and does not necessarily imply consent. Faculty will receive copies of the signed form(s).

IV. Merit Allocation

Merit allocation is the second part of the merit process and is performed in the following fall semester once departments have received the funds for this purpose from the College. These funds are generally called the “compensation pool” or “raise pool,” and the amount is determined by the Regents as a percentage (in 2024, this figure was 4%). This is a limited pool of money that units (departments and programs) must allocate to faculty according to their internal policies and processes. Department Chairs work with the Arts and Sciences Budget Office to gain access to the spreadsheet that shows each unit’s pool, which reflects the baseline amount determined by Regents, less any mandatory skims by the College (e.g., a general skim, the Chair’s merit allocation determined by the Deans, and the results of any faculty retention cost-sharing agreements). Importantly, the raise pool is not only used to allocate funds for faculty base salaries along the lines of the merit review scores but is also expected to be used for addressing issues of salary compression and equity across the faculty.⁴ In spring 2025, the Chair formed an

⁴ For more information on annual salary adjustments, see Regent Policy 11.B (“Faculty Salary”): <https://www.cu.edu/regents/regent-policy-0>; see also the CU Boulder Faculty Affairs website on salary and equity: <https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/faculty-personnel-actions-career-milestones/evaluation-compensation/salary-equity>

ad hoc Merit Allocation Procedures Committee composed of tenured faculty. That committee developed the following set of guidelines for determining salary raises that considers both merit and issues of salary equity.

DES Merit Allocation Philosophy

The *ad hoc* Merit Allocation Procedures Committee acknowledges that the department must work within a deeply flawed salary raise system that is often inadequate in accounting for inflation and cost of living adjustments, let alone the unique value that Ethnic Studies' research, teaching, and service adds to the University. The report cited above by the Faculty Salary Procedures Working Group (FSPWG, footnote 2) discusses additional complex flaws of this system generally. A major takeaway of this report is the tension between accounting for issues of salary equity while also rewarding faculty for major research accomplishments that are the bedrocks of tenure and promotion at a Research 1 institution. Further, this balance must be achieved while working with limited funds in a zero-sum scenario (focusing more on one necessarily takes away from the other). As the FSPWG report also shows, it is unreasonable to expect departments alone to rectify salary equity issues while also recognizing and rewarding research accomplishments and meritorious teaching and service. We concur with the FSPWG that, ultimately, the University must provide more robust salary raise pools to rectify this tension and work toward greater equity in faculty salaries (including those of teaching faculty).

Given this situation, the *ad hoc* Merit Allocation Procedures Committee has determined that the salary raise allocation process should strive *primarily* to recognize faculty professional performance (merit), while also *secondarily* attending to salary equity within the limited resources available. The following procedures act as guidelines for the department Chair (who bears the ultimate responsibility for implementing them), while also stressing the need for collective decision making and transparency in the process.

DES Merit Allocation Procedures

Upon receiving notification of the raise pool and the opening of the merit allocation process from the College, the Chair will call a meeting with the tenured faculty of the Ex Comm to discuss and review faculty salaries and merit scores. This body will serve as the *de facto* DES Salary Committee. The Salary Committee will note the baseline percent of the raise pool after accounting for any mandatory skims and will allocate individual salary raises in alignment with the following guidelines:

1. All faculty who received an *overall* merit score of 3 or higher ("Meets Expectations," "Exceeds Expectations," or "Outstanding") are entitled to a baseline salary adjustment determined by the Salary Committee as represented by a percentage of the raise pool after accounting for any mandatory skims. Exceptions to this guideline include faculty who may have recently received a retention agreement, which generally precludes a faculty member's eligibility for merit raises within the period in which salary is being raised (this is "hard coded" by the Budget Office in the spreadsheet and cannot be edited).
2. The Salary Committee will then decide the percentage of the remaining funds to be used toward merit and the percentage that will be used to address salary equity issues. In

deliberating this, the Salary Committee will review faculty salary “scatter plot” charts (available upon request from SSCI Divisional Support Staff) to assess any equity issues. Equity should be assessed along the lines of gender (including gender identity and/or gender expression), dis/ability, as well as “career merit.” In assessing gender equity, the committee should ask: Does a female-identified or non-binary faculty member’s salary reflect the same level of output and department contributions as a cis-male-identified faculty member at the same rank? In assessing dis/ability equity, the committee should ask: Does the salary of a faculty member who is living with a disability reflect the same level of output and department contributions as an able-bodied faculty member at the same rank? Career merit is defined as “a function of annual merit scores over time” (FSPWG report, pp. 15-16). In assessing career merit equity, the committee should ask: Does a faculty member’s salary reflect that of their peer(s) in the same rank after accounting for their time since the terminal degree and overall department contributions as assessed by merit scores over time?

3. Once the Salary Committee has determined the percentage to allocate to merit, the committee will decide upon a flat dollar amount to represent salary increases that are merit-based and that will coincide with overall scores of 4 (“Exceeds Expectations”) and 5 (“Outstanding”). It is recommended that the Salary Committee assess faculty scores on a multi-year rolling average rather than on single year scores to account for meritorious work in periodic zero raise pool years and thus facilitate and reward the pursuit of longer-term projects like academic books.
4. The committee will dedicate the remaining funds to addressing individual salary equity issues, as assessed in #2 above.
5. This process should be documented by the committee for reference in future years.

The Chair’s merit increase is automatically determined by the Deans and cannot be adjusted. The Chair and members of the Salary Committee are expected to recuse themselves in issues of possible conflicts of interest. After review and approval from the Salary Committee, the Chair will forward the salary adjustment recommendations and merit increases to the A&S Dean’s Office for review and approval. Base salary adjustments take effect in January of the next calendar year and faculty are notified of their specific figures by Human Resources.

V. Salary Equity Appeals Process

The department has adopted a process for salary equity appeals that closely mirrors the suggested process in the CU Boulder Academic Affairs Policy on Salary Equity (see link above in footnote 1). All faculty are encouraged to review that policy document for insight into the broader landscape of salary equity and the duties and responsibilities of various levels of campus leadership.

A faculty member who wishes to initiate an appeal based on salary inequity should submit the appeal *in writing* to the department Chair. The Chair must provide a written response to the appellant within 30 calendar days. (Exceptions may be made for salary equity appeals filed during semester break or during the summer months.) A valid salary equity appeal must satisfy the following criteria:

- a. The appeal must be based on total salary, not annual raises.
- b. The appeal may not be based on “Other Faculty” appointments (e.g., associate chair, chair, faculty director, associate dean, endowed chair.) Only base salary is to be considered.
- c. The appeal must be based on a comparison between the salary of the appellant and the salaries of all other faculty members of comparable career merit in the same unit whose salaries are determined within the unit.
- d. The appellant should compare his or her salary to those of the unit as a whole. A higher salary paid to one faculty member may not form the basis of a salary equity appeal if the appellant is equitably paid in comparison to most other faculty members in the unit with comparable career merit. Nothing in this paragraph, however, should be interpreted as barring a salary equity appeal based on evidence of racial or gender bias within the unit.
- e. A difference in salaries between two faculty members in the same unit may not, in and of itself, form the basis for a salary equity appeal even if the two faculty members have been working in the unit for the same number of years.
- f. The salary equity appeal may not be based on a comparison with faculty members in other units.
- g. The salary equity appeal may not be based on a comparison with faculty members in the unit whose salaries are determined by a person or process outside of the unit's control.
- h. The salary equity appeal may not be based on individual salaries, salary ranges, or salary averages of another campus, another institution, AAU statistics, or other outside sources of comparison.
- i. The salary equity appeal may only request prospective relief, to be addressed when funds for salary increases are next available to the unit. Back pay, retroactive salary increases, or other kinds of remedies may not be requested or awarded as part of this process.

Additionally,

1. The appellant shall be given an opportunity to submit any written documentation of their claim.
2. The Chair may request additional documentation from the appellant and should consult with the Salary Committee regarding the appeal.
3. The unit's response to the salary equity appeal must be in writing and must include an explanation of the decision reached.
4. The unit does not have the authority to award back pay, retroactive salary increases, or other kinds of remedies.
5. The determination of a salary equity appeal in the primary unit, through the primary unit's appeals process, may be appealed to the Dean within 30 days. The appellant and the department Chair shall be given an opportunity to participate in the appeal process.

As part of the annual process of recommending salary increases to the Dean, the Chair should verify in writing that an equity evaluation has been conducted pursuant to these procedures. Inequities identified as part of this review or through a completed salary equity appeal process at the primary unit level should be addressed fully with the current year's salary funds available to the unit. The unit must devote up to half of its salary funds to the resolution of such inequities if any have been identified. If inequities cannot be fully resolved during the current year, the unit

must submit with its recommended salary increases a plan for resolving the inequities with future salary funds.

Salary Appeals Timeline

1. Salary equity appeals submitted for consideration by the primary unit must be filed by September 15 for resolution during that academic year.
2. The primary unit salary equity appeal process must be completed by November 1. If the appellant is not satisfied with the primary unit's response, they may appeal to the Dean no later than November 15.
3. The Dean must complete their evaluation by January 1. If the appellant is not satisfied with the Dean's response, the appellant may appeal to the campus Salary Equity Appeals Committee no later than January 15.
4. By April 1, the Salary Equity Appeals Committee will submit its recommendations for all salary equity appeals to the Provost, who will make a final decision on the appeal no later than May 1.

VI. Salary Increases from Retention Agreements

The Merit Allocation Procedures Committee acknowledges that some faculty may seek and receive offers from other institutions as a mechanism for increasing their salary and securing other areas of research support (e.g., increased research funds, course releases, etc.). We concur with the FSPWG report that, while this can be an effective measure for achieving a salary raise that is more representative of “market” salary levels, the dynamic this creates can lead to issues of salary compression within the department and can benefit some faculty over others, depending on their unique situations. For example, faculty can be limited in their pursuit of outside offers based on existing family ties to Colorado, specific healthcare requirements that are unique to local facilities, among other considerations.

We also concur with the FSPWG report that the university bears the primary responsibility to provide more competitive salaries for all faculty through the annual merit process. As that report also highlights, it's notable that the Provost's office recently increased raise amounts for faculty who have achieved a promotion. Nevertheless, given this situation, the department should strive to retain our world-class faculty while also accounting for issues of salary compression that may result from individual retention agreements over time. One analogy for this can be “a rising tide raises all ships.” However, we acknowledge that this process can take time given the constraints of limited funds provided for salary compression equity.

As a window into this process, when a faculty member alerts the Chair to a possible outside offer (typically an invitation to a campus visit for a position at another institution), the Chair brings this to the attention of the Ex Comm (excluding the retention candidate, if applicable). After discussion, and with the approval from Ex Comm to move forward on a retention offer, the Chair notifies the Dean's office. In consultation with the faculty member who is requesting a retention offer, the Chair negotiates the terms and specifics of the agreement with the Dean's office on their behalf. These negotiations may entail a preemptive retention offer so that the faculty member can consider not pursuing the campus visit. Regardless, the terms of retention offers are

typically negotiated via a cost-sharing arrangement between the division and the department. In other words, the division typically does not support the retention in full and asks departments to allocate funds from future years' salary pools to account for incremental salary increases, as well as to dedicate a certain amount of department funds toward a faculty member's research account speedtype. The process concludes with the retention candidate signing the agreement letter after it has received the approval from the Provost and any other necessary offices.