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MERIT ADVANCEMENTS
(Revised 8/25)

The merit review process at UCSB (and across the UC system) is designed to reward meritorious performance with advancement in step and/or rank and the corresponding salary increment. This system of regular evaluation integrates faculty salary with specific levels of scholarly achievement, determined through peer review. The phrase “merit review” in the UC is used to refer to the review process to move up a step on the scales, which is directly linked to compensation.

Departments should define standards and expectations for their field, specific to the candidate’s rank/step, and apply these standards consistently in the merit review process. Reasonable flexibility should be used in balancing heavier commitments in some areas against lighter ones in others, as appropriate for the candidate’s field, department, or division (per APM 210-1-d). Thus, the weighting of the three areas need not be equal in all cases. Likewise, accomplishments within a review period may be uneven across areas.

Merit increases are granted when performance meets or exceeds the high standards of the campus and discipline. The level of increase depends on the extent to which the record exceeds expectations for that rank/step. Criteria and principles for advancement are described below.

I. Normative, One-Step Advancement

A one-step advancement generally requires meeting departmental and campus standards of achievement, appropriate for rank and step, in all three areas of review. The overall record may not demonstrate equal strength in all areas of review, but at the very least, overall performance must meet expectations with no recurring deficiencies in any area of review. A normative advancement is appropriate either when the expectations for performance in all areas have been met or when heavier responsibilities in one area of review can justify a **temporary** reduction in the accomplishments in another area, for a single review period. Such flexibility does not suggest a relaxation of standards; instead it can be afforded to short-term circumstances in which patterns of work, which can be explained, depart from established expectations, not to ongoing deficiencies in performance.

II. Accelerated Advancements

When formulating justifications for advancements beyond one step, the department and reviewing agencies must first provide evidence that the candidate has met the requirements for a regular, one-step advancement calibrated to the rank/step of the candidate, prior to addressing any recommendation for acceleration. Because ongoing excellence is the expectation for merit advancements, a clear analysis and justification, explaining the basis for any acceleration, must be provided. Extraordinary achievements in the record do not qualify a candidate for acceleration if performance in all areas does not meet expected standards at that level. **In no case for accelerated advancement may deficiencies be evident in any area of review.**

Accelerations at a more senior level require more evidence of exceptional performance than accelerations at a more junior level. What might justify an acceleration for an Assistant Professor/Assistant Teaching Professor might justify only a normative advancement for a Full Professor/Full Teaching Professor and might not meet expectations for a Professor/Teaching Professor at Above Scale. Similarly, service duties are expected to increase as faculty advance in rank and step.

Accelerations are awarded in full step and/or one-half step increments (e.g., 1½ steps, 2 steps, etc.). Typically, accelerations will be expected to be awarded in step, except when the recommendation justifies a one-half step increase, which is conferred in off-scale (i.e., a one-half step equivalent in off-scale). In rare and unique cases, accelerations beyond one-half step in off-scale may be granted when warranted based on appropriate circumstances and justification (such as at barrier steps).

Consistent with the associated movement up the ladder, a 1-step acceleration can be understood to indicate that the faculty member has not only exceeded the department/campus/disciplinary standards of excellence expected for a normative advancement, but that the level of achievement is broadly equivalent to the accomplishments of 2 full review periods, recognizing that there may be limited opportunities in some areas of review in a given time period. As the size of the acceleration increases, increasingly meritorious achievements are expected that

distinguish the record (e.g. a 2-step acceleration broadly connotes the equivalent of 3 review periods of accomplishments). These achievements must be contextualized and justified. Increases at the highest levels require evidence of identifiable extraordinary accomplishments and/or impact in both research/creative activity and teaching, as well as evidence of superior accomplishments and/or recognitions in other areas.

Acceleration at the time of a merit review must be based on activity during the period since the last successful review and calibrated based on expectations for that rank and step. Acceleration in step at the time of a career review may be based on the cumulative record.

A variety of accomplishments founded in the overall record for the period and/or based on significant, specific achievements may form the basis for an acceleration. The extent of acceleration must be justified by the level of performance/achievement adjusted to the candidate's rank/step. The following are examples of possible evidence of superior performance:

- Professor series: Achievement well above disciplinary/field norms in research/creative activities coupled with excellent performance in all other areas.
- Teaching Professor series: Achievement well above the high campus standards in teaching coupled with excellent performance in all other areas.
- Extraordinary achievements in two areas of review, coupled with excellent performance in the other area.
- Prestigious, significant new awards or other such evidence of extraordinary peer recognition for the impact of past creative work or teaching.
- Extraordinary achievements and activities advancing inclusive excellence, exceeding normative expectations, within the areas of review.
- Extraordinary accomplishments in administrative service roles after the completion of a normative term (e.g., completion of 3 years as Department Chair; excluding career administrators), with significant leadership, activities, and achievements exceeding normative expectations for the role. Term of office and accomplishments should be documented in the case record. (See RB I-67 for more on Evaluation of Administrative Service).

III. Decelerated Advancement

One-half Step advancement

In rare cases, when performance does not meet the standards required for a normative increase, a within-step increase of one-half step may be granted (i.e., a one-half step equivalent in off-scale only, without an advancement in step), when justified by a convincing explanation. Circumstances in which a one-half step advancement might be appropriate include cases in which a **consistent** shortcoming in the record exists in a single area, but with demonstrated achievements in other areas. In these cases, a normative advancement cannot be justified based on the ongoing deficiency, however, the accomplishments in other areas can be acknowledged.

Further advancement will be allowed only when the normative number of years at step since previous advancement in off-scale has passed. A faculty member may receive no more than two consecutive ½ step increases in the off-scale supplement.

IV. No Change

As with any on-time advancement, the individual's next eligibility date for academic review will be based on the effective date of the advancement, if an acceleration in step or off-scale occurs. If the outcome of a merit review is no change in step or off-scale, the faculty member remains eligible for review each year until advancement in rank, step, or off-scale occurs. See Red Binder I-4-III for important parameters.