School of Communication Studies

Merit Pay

Approved: 2014
School of Communication Studies
Merit Policy
Approved 2/28/14

Merit:
The JMU Faculty Handbook refers to merit as: “Funds disbursed by the commonwealth to the university for annual salary adjustments are to be allocated principally on the basis of performance (merit). Annual adjustments in the salaries of faculty members are not an entitlement but rather reflect continued meaningful contributions in the three areas of expected faculty member performance (i.e., for an instructional faculty member, teaching, scholarship and service). This system of salary adjustment is intended to encourage all faculty members toward continuous performance improvement” (Section III.I.2).

Eligibility: Any SCOM faculty member who is required to perform and be annually evaluated in all three areas of performance (teaching, scholarship, and service) as a condition of their continued appointment.

Merit Policy:
All eligible faculty members in the School of Communication Studies will be considered for merit provided they accurately complete and submit the SCOM Merit Worksheet when merit is available to the School, and by the due date specified by the AUH. Guidelines afforded by the JMU Faculty Handbook offer that when funds are made available to distribute as merit pay, the distribution is to be made relative to faculty members’ annual evaluated performances, and that past performances may be taken into account when multiple years have passed between merit periods. Accordingly, the ordering of merit to be distributed among faculty is determined using merit scores reflective of an individual’s performance for each year under review, as calculated by formulas of the SCOM Merit Worksheet formulas and using data from a faculty member’s submitted FAP and the AUH’s Annual Performance Evaluation. The merit scores of all eligible faculty applicants are ranked from high to low, and grouped into three (3) cohorts of similar scores. Merit funds are then divided into three parts and distributed to eligible faculty in proportion of their salary. While a single overall annual evaluation rating of “unsatisfactory” does not disqualify a faculty member from submitting the SCOM Merit Worksheet and receiving merit, particularly when that faculty member has demonstrated a sustained record of excellent performance between merit periods, such negative evaluations may nonetheless be considered by the AUH prior to merit allocation.

Performance Evaluations for Teaching, Scholarship, and Service
Ratings for annual performance in teaching, scholarship, and service will be determined by the Annual Performance Evaluation completed by the AUH, submitted to the Dean, and returned to the faculty member.

Completing and Submitting the SCOM Merit Worksheet
Eligible faculty members must accurately complete and submit the SCOM Merit Worksheet so as to be considered for merit pay. Faculty members are to enter data beginning with the most
recent past academic year, and concluding with either the year merit was last available, or the year they first became eligible for merit, whichever is the most recent.

The procedure follows:

- Faculty members will reference their FAP (Faculty Activity Plan) for each year to be considered for merit.
- For every year to be considered, faculty will enter the weighted percentage on record in the FAP for each of the performance areas: teaching, scholarship, and service.
- Faculty will then refer to the Annual Performance Evaluation submitted by the AUH for each year to be considered so as to ascertain the evaluation rating issued that year for each area of performance. The evaluation rating for each area is to be entered numerically on the SCOM Merit Worksheet as Excellent (6 points), Satisfactory (3 points), and Unsatisfactory (0 points).
- Faculty then multiply each of the weighted categories by the corresponding evaluation scores so as to produce a merit score for the year.

**Example**

- Teaching: (category weight) x (evaluation score) = (.45) x (Excellent * 6) = 2.7
- Scholarship: (category weight) x (evaluation score) = (.40) x (Satisfactory * 3) = 1.2
- Service: (category weight) x (evaluation score) = (.15) x (Excellent * 6) = .9
  
  TOTAL = 2.7 + 1.2 + .9 = 4.8 merit points for this particular year.

- A faculty member’s Total Merit Score is determined by summing the total merit points for each particular year of eligibility between periods of available merit funds. For instance, if it has been three years between periods of available merit funds, then a faculty member would determine their Total Merit Score using no more than three years of eligibility.

**Annual Weighting for Each Category**

Weighting for each category of evaluated performance (teaching, scholarship, service) is determined between the individual faculty member in consultation with the AUH when submitting the annual FAP. No category percentage should exceed or be less than the values determined in the AUPAC guidelines.

**Awarding of Merit Pay**

Total Merit Scores from all submitted SCOM Merit Worksheets are to be tabulated and ordered from highest to lowest score, and then grouped into three (3) cohorts of similar scores so as to indicate three orders of merit pay. Faculty members are to be sent an anonymized version of this ordered listing so that they may confirm their place in the ordering of scores. The AUH will assign merit pay to the faculty in the following manner:

- Faculty members in the first category receive 1.33 times the standard dispersion of available merit money.
- Faculty members in the second category receive 1.0 of the standard dispersion of available merit money.
Faculty members in the third category receive .67 of the standard dispersions of available merit money.

**Faculty Appeal**

The annual evaluation of faculty performance, the determination of merit, and the decision by the AUH of an eligible faculty member as disqualified from merit consideration, are three separate matters. Disagreement with the AUH annual performance evaluation must follow guidelines of the JMU Faculty Handbook and SCOM AUPAC for appropriate and timely appeal. All others contests of the merit process will follow the AUPAC guidelines regarding faculty appeal.