Faculty of Arts and Science  
PTR Process – Best Practice Guidelines

These guidelines outline what the Faculty believes to be the best practices found within its departments with regard to the PTR process. This by no means is a directive that Arts & Science academic units must follow. Each unit has its own culture and this must inform and differentiate practice and process in each unit. However, we invite you to take advantage of some of the best practices found in these guidelines when you consider your local practice, process and correspondence to colleagues. (Please note that references throughout to the Chair are inclusive of Chairs, Principals, and Academic Directors; references to departments are inclusive of Centres, Institutes, Programs and Schools.) Please also note that these guidelines are to be used as a supplement to the PTR/Merit Assessment and Salary Increase Instructions that will be issued by the Provost’s Office in due course.

Colleagues should receive a letter from you in advance of the PTR decision outlining the process by which and by whom the PTR decision is made. This information should either be imbedded in the narrative or attached to the letter in the form of a memorandum. It is advisable that the letters/memoranda contain information on the following areas.

1. Membership of the PTR Committee  
   Ultimately the PTR decision and allocation is the responsibility of the Chair. However, we strongly advise each of you to have a PTR committee that is advisory to the Chair. A common departmental committee structure includes the Chair and Associate Chairs for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies (often bolstered with the addition of one or more senior colleagues). Alternatively, the Chair and two or more senior colleagues can form the PTR committee. One large science department, for example, has a large PTR committee of “approximately” ten members. Finally, as appropriate for those departments who engage full and part-time teaching stream faculty, we suggest an Assistant or an Associate Professor, Teaching Stream should be added to the committee for the purpose of assessing the performance of teaching stream staff.

   PTR committee members should not have access to salary information of their colleagues nor should they be informed of the actual dollar amount of individual awards. One department makes this explicit in its communication of the PTR award to reassure colleagues of the confidentiality of salary information. Best practice, regardless of the weight placed on teaching, service or research/professional activity, is to assess the work first by means of a point system and then allow the Chair armed with the relative rankings to make the dollar allocations.

2. Teaching Stream and Professorial Stream Letters  
   It is critical that teaching stream staff (Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream; Associate Professor, Teaching Stream and Professor, Teaching Stream) and professorial staff receive different letters/memoranda because the relative weighting of teaching, service and either research (professorial stream) or pedagogical/professional development (teaching stream) will differ markedly. For example, teaching and pedagogical activity and service in support of teaching duties must carry the predominant weight in the award of PTR to members of the teaching stream.

3. The Competitive Nature of the Pools  
   It is important that academic staff understand from the outset that PTR increases are relative to the performance of colleagues in the same pool – below the breakpoint and above the breakpoint. Two brief examples found in the letters to colleagues from two separate departments succinctly deliver this message:
1. The premise of Progress Through the Ranks (PTR) is that, each year, you are jousting with colleagues in a zero sum game. For PTR allocation processes you are not compared against yourself from year to year. Even if you have had two very good (productive, active) years in succession, your PTR may be significantly lower in one of them should a few of your colleagues have an outstanding year at the same time.

2. PTR increases for individual faculty members are relative to the performance of colleagues in the same pool. A below average increase should not necessarily be interpreted as a negative evaluation. It may only reflect the outstanding performance of some colleagues.

It is useful to inform academic staff that the make-up of the pools changes from year to year with the addition of new colleagues and the movement of colleagues upwards from one pool to another. This phenomenon seems to be misunderstood by many academic staff. The movement between pools can have positive and negative effects. If a high performer moves between pools (e.g. from below-the-breakpoint to above-the-breakpoint) those remaining may receive a higher PTR increase that year for a performance similar to that of the previous year. Those in the above-the-breakpoint pool may receive a lower increase for similar performances in the face of increased competition from the new member of the pool.

4. The Communication of the Formula for Assessment

4.1 Professorial Staff
The relative weight of teaching, service and research/creative professional achievement (professorial stream) or pedagogical/professional development activity (teaching stream) must be communicated clearly. Most units employ a simple statement based on the ten-point scale for professorial staff: 4 points for research/creative professional achievement; 4 points for teaching; and 2 points for service. However, there are variations to this scheme, normally with more or less emphasis on teaching or research. In rare instances the formulas can be adjusted to recognize longstanding academic administrative service (for example, for an undergraduate coordinator) where such duties are onerous enough to negatively impact on teaching or research. You should communicate any such variances to the Dean when you submit your salary increase information to the Faculty Human Resources Office.

Rather than the simple announcement of the formula to be employed to assess teaching, research and service, we recommend that more detailed information on how academic staff are to be evaluated in these areas be communicated to academic staff before the PTR assessment is made.

4.2 Teaching Stream Staff
For those units employing teaching stream staff (Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream; Associate Professor, Teaching Stream and Professor, Teaching Stream), a separate statement on weighting should be included. For example, one department currently uses a 10 point system in its assessment of teaching stream members: 8 points for teaching and related professional activities and 2 points for service. Within the eight points for teaching and related professional activities the relative weighting between the two has not always been clearly enunciated (perhaps to recognize outstanding professional activity in a particular year). Teaching performance certainly should receive the most weight in any year. For example, there is nothing to preclude an outstanding teacher who receives consistently high student evaluations and who makes regular, valuable contributions and innovations to pedagogy and the development of new curriculum to receive a score of 8 out of 8 for teaching. Nor for a very good teacher to receive a score of 6 out of 8 for teaching and an additional two points for pedagogical/professional development activity.
as outlined below. It should be noted that regardless of teaching performance/activity pedagogical/professional development activity must also be recognized and rewarded each year.

Some examples are found below:

i) participation at and contributions to academic conferences where sessions on pedagogical research and technique are prominent;

ii) teaching-related activity by the candidate outside of his/her classroom functions and responsibilities;

iii) professional work that allows the candidate to maintain a mastery of his or her subject area, provided that such professional work enhances directly the teaching mission of the candidate’s academic unit and the Faculty of Arts and Science; and

iv) the ongoing pursuit of further academic qualifications.

5. The Assessment of Research and Creative Professional Achievement

5.1 Weighting
Each unit will evaluate research in different ways depending upon its local culture and practice. However these differences should be clearly enunciated in advance so that faculty understand what is being evaluated.

For instance, some departments recognize and credit doctoral supervision under the category of research; others under teaching and in one instance recognition is split between the two categories. Each option is acceptable provided faculty members are informed of the weighting.

The relative weighting of research output also varies by unit. In some units publication of an article in a top tier journal is the summit of scholarly achievement. In others a refereed book in a top press, resulting from several years of research, justifiably, is well rewarded. Presentations, lectures, addresses delivered at international discipline conferences and publication in conference proceedings are most highly valued in others. In some disciplines the number and value of external, competitive grants received and research contracts awarded are important indicators of scholarly activity. A patent, contributions to the development of government policy or a juried exhibition of artistic work may each indicate significant creative professional achievement.

A five-page paper in one discipline may easily outweigh a twenty-page paper in another. A good small book may be equivalent to two or three major journal articles in some disciplines. Single authorship and joint authorship are evaluated differentially depending on the discipline. Monographs and edited books also receive differential weighting. An invitation to deliver a keynote lecture at one conference may represent the highest honour bestowed upon members of a discipline. A presentation at a regional conference may be far less prestigious. Certainly all of the above are part of the mix in the evaluation of scholarship: what is at essence is the number and prestige attached to each. The judgement by the committee on the relative value of each of these activities is its most difficult task. The task is made more difficult by the fact that the prestige of journals, presses, conferences etc. is not static, but with few exceptions, undergoes constant and continual change. Moreover, as the University is an internationally significant research institution, the reach of our faculty is increasingly global and the number of outlets for
the dissemination of scholarly research is growing. Thus, a strict enunciation of what is and what is not considered to be top, mid, or bottom tier or what conference, journal, or press is considered more or less prestigious is exceedingly difficult. The evaluation and definition should be fluid and rest with each year’s PTR committee.

However, this does not mean that some measure of relative importance cannot be communicated to faculty either in writing or in a public meeting of academic staff. For example, one department employs a five-point scale in its evaluation of research as follows:

5  =  outstanding research by international standards
4  =  first class research with clear evidence of impact and international recognition
3  =  strong research activity with a good combination of quality and productivity
2  =  regular research activity with the combination of quality and productivity somewhat less than the department norm
1  =  some research activity, but well below the department norm
0  =  no research activity

5.2 Timing of Credit for Scholarly Activity
The way in which credit is allocated annually for scholarly activity also varies across units. As a general rule of thumb we recommend that you allocate full credit the year in which the culmination of the scholarly activity actually takes place: a publication is accepted (in press), lecture or presentation delivered, patent granted, grant received and honour or prize awarded. However, we recognize that several disciplines spread credit over a period of one to three years. For example, some units award credit in year one when a book or article is accepted, credit in year two when the book or article is published and in year three when the reviews of the work are in. The weight awarded for any of the three years may also vary by unit, depending on local culture. The communication of the timing of the credit for these activities should be precise. The keys are to ensure that all faculty are aware of how and when the credit is allocated and that previous credit is clearly identified in annual activity reports.

The same rule of thumb applies to credit given to work in progress. Once again there is variance according to unit. Best practice in our units includes the submission of work in progress by academic staff so that it and the progress of the work to completion may be evaluated fully and fairly. As in the case above, the communication of the timing (including any statutes of limitation) should be precise. Credit should be identified by the Chair in the communication of the PTR award. Academic staff in their annual activity reports should identify previous credit.

Finally, the application of credit for work should be consistent from year to year. Any change in the way in which credit will be awarded should be discussed in advance with the members of your academic unit.

6. The Assessment of Teaching
In our review of the departmental submissions we were pleased to see that departments had a multi-dimensional view of how teaching was to be assessed. As one department puts it, the judgement involves contribution to the overall teaching mission of the unit, as well as individual performance in the classroom.
Course development, curricular innovation (both organization and delivery), graduate and postdoctoral student supervision/mentoring and the integration of research into undergraduate and graduate courses are all considerations that may be used in the assessment of teaching. In addition, the number of students taught, the type of course taught (i.e., a large, compulsory undergraduate course versus a small, elective fourth year seminar course), pedagogical work with Teaching Assistants, teaching in collaborative programs, and membership on thesis committees are also considered by many departments. Once again, weights and emphasis will vary from unit to unit depending on local culture but academic staff should be informed of the variety of activity upon which the assessment of teaching will be based in their unit.

While it may not be necessary to provide faculty with an exhaustive list of areas that may be considered in the evaluation of teaching, some measure of relative importance in line with your unit’s culture can be communicated to faculty, either in writing or in a public meeting of academic staff. The same department noted above also employs a scale in its evaluation of teaching as follows:

4 = Truly outstanding, with significant contributions to curriculum/teaching development
3 = very good in all respects with particular strengths in some
2 = clear satisfactory performance
1 = acceptable performance
0 = unacceptable performance

7. Service

7.1 General

Service can take many forms in the university and all full time academic staff are expected to contribute. It does not include service to outside organizations that are not related to the advancement of scholarship or teaching. It includes service to the administration of the academic unit, the Faculty, Faculty Association and the University at large. External service may include contributions to scholarship as an editor, referee or member of an editorial board, conference organization, academic reviewing, membership on external Ph.D. committees, continuing education activities, work with professional, technical or scholarly organizations or membership on consultative committees for government organizations.

7.2 College Service and Public Education

In your assessment of the service component you should take fully into consideration provision III. 2.e of the Memorandum of Agreement. The provision states that service to a College shall be given the same weight as service to a department in the awarding of merit increases as well as in the granting of tenure and promotion.

Public education activity by faculty, particularly through the popular media, generates a positive media image that reflects the value of the University to society. These activities include public presentations, publications in popular periodicals and newspapers and appearances on television and radio. Such activity should be recognized in the service component of the faculty member’s annual assessment.
8. **Research and Study Leaves**
New Chairs are often not sure of how to assess the performance of faculty on research and study leave. The Provost’s *Salary Increase Instructions* are clear in direction in this regard. We repeat the provision here as a reminder.

Staff members who are on research and study leave during the academic year should be assessed with reference to the standards applicable to the leave activity and only on those criteria which are appropriate in light of the work planned for their leave. As a research and study leave plan has been approved for each individual an evaluation should take into account the degree to which the objectives of the plan have been realized or where the objectives have changed during the course of research, the degree to which the research has advanced. Some staff may remain engaged in teaching, graduate supervision and/or service activities while on a research and study leave and unit heads should use their discretion in such situations in determining what recognition is warranted in the PTR determination.

Faculty on research and study leave should be awarded a merit amount appropriate to their accomplishments and should not simply be awarded the average for the unit. The PTR amount is not to be adjusted downwards for full-time staff, despite the fact that they may have been receiving less than full salary while on leave. For part-time staff, the amount should be pro-rated to the percentage of FTE that the person normally receives when not on leave.

9. **Staff on Unpaid Leave**
The Provost’s *Salary Increase Instructions* state that staff who are on unpaid leave do not normally receive a PTR increase. The Faculty of Arts & Scienc Activity Report reporting year May 1 to April 30 does not exactly coincide with the academic year July 1 to June 30. However, there should be no PTR increase for staff on unpaid leave from July 1 to June 30. For staff on unpaid leave for the July 1 to December 31 period or the January 1 to June 30 period, PTR should be pro-rated to 50%.

10. **Staff on Maternity/Parental/Adoption Leave**
The Provost’s *Salary Increase Instructions* treat this issue in detail and is excerpted below:

With respect to PTR, the principle of no professional disadvantage should prevail for staff on maternity/parental/adoption leave. Calculations for PTR should be based on the faculty member’s work prior to and after the leave, with allowances for a longer-term review to ensure no anomalies occurred. The faculty member’s performance prior to the leave may be a good indication of the PTR for the leave period, although in cases where the faculty member was ill or unable to function at full capacity prior to the leave, it may be necessary to extrapolate over a longer period of time.

11. **Part-time Staff**
Part-time academic staff on annual contracts with appointments of over 25% receive PTR as well as ATB. Please ensure that all part-time staff with annual contracts are included on your B6 so that central funding for their increases will be provided. Increases for sessional lecturers will be covered under the CUPE 3902 Unit 3 collective agreement.
12. **Cross-Appointed Staff**
Merit increases for academic staff holding budgetary cross-appointments are awarded separately by each unit; however, the total amount of the award must only appear on the histogram where their primary appointment lies.

13. **Letters to Academic Staff Informing them of their PTR Award**
All academic staff should receive a letter from the Chair informing them of their PTR award. The letter should include comments with regard to the performance of the academic staff member that year. For example, if the academic staff member’s publication record was very good in that particular year, this should be mentioned explicitly. Meritorious service, excellent teaching, pedagogical innovation or a heavier than the norm supervisory load, etc. also should be mentioned. When an individual receives a Dean’s Excellence Award, the Chair’s salary letter to them should indicate that they have received a Dean’s Excellence Award and the amount. In like fashion, a poor performance in teaching, research or service should be noted, along with an offer to discuss with the faculty member ways in which a future performance can be improved.

Several departments now include some general information regarding the accomplishments of departmental colleagues to provide a measure of outstanding performance so that personal performance can be put into perspective and properly gauged. This too appears to be an excellent practice.