Research Faculty Salary Adjustment and Promotion Guidelines

Annual Faculty Salary Adjustment and Merit Adjustment Guidelines

It is the expectation of the university that salary adjustments will be normally handled through the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process (FACSAL). Research faculty members, both regular and restricted, are eligible for annual merit adjustments and special adjustments when available. Merit recommendations for research faculty members are generally expected to track the merit adjustments for teaching and research faculty members. The University issues guidelines on the amount of merit increases and ranges annually.

Supervisors, usually principal investigators, are responsible for conducting an annual evaluation for any and all research faculty. A performance review must be shared with the appointee, and documented in writing. This documentation supports the request for annual merit and/or special adjustments. Departments and colleges have decentralized authority to determine the how and when annual evaluations are conducted. The Human Resources Office of the Office of the Vice President for Research is available to assist departments in implementing performance evaluation programs for research faculty.

Other salary adjustment may also be submitted and approved outside of the merit process. These increases may reflect more gradual changes in job responsibility, scholarship, market competitiveness or internal alignment. Supervisors should carefully review the salaries of research faculty on an annual basis to best manage the work force.

Salary Adjustment Guidelines

The annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process (FACSAL) should be used in most circumstances to assure that faculty salaries are commensurate with their contributions and scholarship. At the time of the merit process the department will have the option to request additional adjustments to salary based on other relevant factors such as internal alignment/equity or market competitiveness. The following procedures are specific to salary increases occurring outside of the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process. Examples of such adjustments might be for promotion in rank, increased responsibility, retention, equity, or other reasons critical to retaining productive research faculty members and compensating them fairly.

The salary for research faculty members may be adjusted outside of the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process. There are many factors to be considered when making a salary determination for employees, including job complexities, market salaries, salaries paid to other employees with comparable responsibilities, and available funds. Departmental supervisors may contact the Human Resources Office of the Office of the Vice President for Research to discuss options and access data that may be helpful in decision making. Requests for salary adjustments for research faculty may be made and approved outside the annual process in the following circumstances:

1. Retention.
2. Completion of a degree or professional designation/certification.
3. Additional significant new job duties.
4. Change in rank following a search.

Retention: Occasionally, a research faculty member may receive a job offer from an external entity that a business unit may wish to counter. Retention increases may be approved when there is a specific offer, or high degree of certainty that an offer is forthcoming. Retention adjustments are not likely to be approved when the primary effort is to align a faculty member’s salary with other salaries, or in an effort to be more “competitive.” Such adjustments should be deferred to the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process.
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Completion of a degree: Research faculty who complete educational milestones such as a new degree, certification, or professional qualification may receive salary adjustments. Departments should establish and apply uniform criteria in deciding eligibility and the amounts of any increases.

Additional job duties: An increase in salary may be approved when a faculty member’s job duties change as a result of a new assignment. This is most commonly the result of internal restructuring, or reassignment often simultaneous with receipt of a new project, grant, or contract. The change should be significant reflecting a new role in the department and not be incremental reflecting small increases in job complexity. As a faculty member’s job becomes more complex over time, appropriate adjustments should be made during the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process.

Change in rank following a search: Salaries may be adjusted as part of a recruitment process. Adjustments should be well justified, and consistent with the salary that an external candidate would likely negotiate.

The documents required for a salary increase are outlined below. Approval by the department head and dean of college or vice president should be obtained before forwarding the request to the Office of the Vice President for Research. To request a salary adjustment, submit a:

I. Personnel action form for faculty (P3A-F) to the Office of the Vice President for Research.
   a. Include a justification statement on the P3A-F for one of four acceptable reasons provided above.
   b. Where appropriate, provide comparison to external market data.
II. Position description entered in PeopleAdmin.
III. Attach candidate’s updated CV/Resume.
IV. New Terms of Faculty Offer may also be required where the terms of employment have changed.

Promotion Guidelines

Research faculty may be promoted in rank to reflect increasing levels of responsibility, skill, or scholarship consistent with the rank descriptions in sections 6.3 – 6.5 of the Faculty Handbook (http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/chapter06/chapter06.html). Promotions in rank are generally requested and approved during the faculty salary adjustment and merit process conducted by the university on an annual basis. Typically, a salary adjustment commensurate with the rank requested and the salaries of similar research faculty in the department will accompany a promotion.

To request a promotion in rank for research faculty during the annual faculty salary adjustment and merit process, enter the requested rank and salary in the merit database (FACSAL) and submit the following to the OVPR-HR:

- Personnel action form for faculty (P3A-F).
- Position description entered in PeopleAdmin.
- Candidate’s updated CV/Resume.

While promotions are generally timed to occur during the annual faculty salary adjustment process, there may be circumstances that support a promotion at other times during the year. A postdoctoral associate who has exceeded his or her time in rank (four years) must be promoted in order to continue employment with Virginia Tech. Requests to promote postdoctoral associates under these circumstance may be made outside the annual faculty salary adjustment process. Business units may also develop and be approved to implement alternate annual promotion cycles for research faculty. The Office of the Vice President for Research and the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost must approve these procedures. Promotions under these circumstances may be accompanied by salary adjustments if one or more of the circumstances under “salary adjustment guidelines” apply. If not, the salary adjustment should be deferred to the annual salary adjustment and merit process.