

Guidelines for Three-Year Salary Reviews

August, 2011

Background

Grinnell College has a merit-based salary system. Faculty legislation in 2004 established a process for recommending faculty raises based on “merit scores” that are established on a periodic (usually three-year) basis. Each review establishes a score that will determine the merit portion of a faculty member’s salary for the coming three years. While the actual amount of merit pay attached to each score can vary from year to year depending on the total size of the salary pool, the same merit score is used until the next review establishes a new score. Merit scores range from 0 to 5. They result from evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service.

While the merit review process is clearly important for determining salaries and appropriately rewarding faculty for hard work and significant accomplishments, the process provides an equally important opportunity for professional growth of faculty members at all stages of their careers. Faculty members are encouraged to engage in self-reflection and examination of their accomplishments with the goal of charting an ambitious but realistic path for the next three years. The previous Context Statement is a good place to start, and examination of achievements over the past three years in light of this document can help form a solid plan for the upcoming three years. A review dossier containing the two Context Statements, the recent FAR’s and updated C.V., a concise departmental commentary, and the Faculty Salary Committee’s summary paragraph provides a basis for a substantive meeting between the Dean and the faculty member to devise strategies and find resources that can transform plans into new accomplishments.

Directions for Individual Faculty Members

Faculty members should submit the following items to the department chair or designated reviewer by a date suggested by the reviewer, but no later than the third week of October:

- Most recent past Context Statement and New Abbreviated Context Statement (see format at <http://web.grinnell.edu/Dean/Reviews/ContextStatement.pdf>);
- Copies of annual Faculty Activity Reports that cover the period being reviewed; and
- Updated Curriculum Vitae.

In writing the new Context Statement, faculty members are highly encouraged to refer to the previous one, in order to reflect on the goals set forth there and what was actually accomplished over the past three years of one’s professional career. Context Statements for salary reviews follow the same format, but are more concise, than a Context Statement for a personnel review. Two paragraphs on teaching, one paragraph on scholarship, and a few sentences summarizing service to the College in this period should be sufficient.

Faculty members whose merit scores will be established as part of a contract renewal or promotion review will already be preparing a full-length Context Statement and submitting it with other materials for their personnel review.

Directions for Department Chairs

First, the department should establish whether the department chair or a designated colleague will coordinate the review. Much of the factual information on achievements in teaching, scholarship, and service can be gleaned from each semester's end-of-course evaluations and the annual Faculty Activity Reports (FARs) for the period being reviewed. The faculty member's Context Statement and C.V. also are important sources.

If the person undergoing merit review is scheduled to be on leave or away from campus during the semester of the review, it is valuable for the department to have planned ahead and visited that person's classes in the previous semester. If this has not been done, the person conducting the review should consult the chair of the faculty on whether class visits can be arranged in time for Budget Committee consideration in the spring.

One to three class visits should take place as part of a merit review. Either the review chair will visit the class, as traditionally done, or else the review chair, in response to a request by the person under review, may agree to invite a different faculty colleague to come in and visit at least one class at some point during the three-year period covered by the review. If someone other than the chair visits the class, this colleague should, in addition to consulting directly with the faculty member, provide a brief report to the review chair on how effectively the faculty member is engaged and continuing to develop as a teacher. The invited colleague should be someone especially well-suited to comment on a focused aspect of teaching that the person under review would like to develop.

The department chair or designated reviewer, after meeting with the colleague to discuss accomplishments and goals set forth in the Context Statement, will prepare a brief report (1 to 1 ½ pages) that supplements the faculty member's Context Statement. This report is not a comprehensive departmental letter, like those for personnel reviews. To round out the faculty member's self-reflection, the most valuable contributions a chair can add are:

- To summarize student response to teaching (as found in end-of-course evaluations from each semester of the period covered by the review);
- To report with specific details on what was observed in the class visit(s); and
- To comment on the level and significance of the faculty member's scholarly achievement, based on knowledge (which Faculty Salary Committee may not have) of norms in the particular discipline, including the selectivity and prestige of publishing venues. Effectiveness of departmental service can also be noted.

This report from the review chair, along with the faculty member's Context Statement and other materials, is due in the Dean's Office by the first Monday in December.

Budget Committee Recommendation

The Budget Committee will make a recommendation of a merit score for the next three years and will provide this information to the Dean along with a brief (one paragraph) rationale for the merit score. This rationale will be conveyed to the faculty member at the conclusion of the review.

Meeting with the Dean

After the review, faculty members who have been reviewed will be invited to meet individually with the Dean for discussion of the review, their accomplishments, and new goals. This meeting will emphasize professional growth and development. Reviewing successes over the previous three years, especially in light of the previous Context Statement, may serve as a useful touchstone in setting goals for the next several years that are both significant and achievable. This is also the appropriate time to discuss with the Dean the institutional and external resources that could be needed to meet the faculty member's professional goals for this next stage of his or her career.

Merit Scores Based on Contract Renewal or Promotion Reviews

For faculty members whose merit scores will be established by a contract renewal or promotion review, the department does not need to prepare a report separate from the personnel review dossier. Directly after their vote on the recommendation to renew the contract (or to promote), the Personnel Committee will establish a merit score to be communicated to and used by the Budget Committee.

Associate Professors who have had a merit score established as part of a tenure and promotion review will undergo the first salary merit review in the third year following the year of the tenure review, and will continue with the three-year merit cycle from there.

An Associate Professor may undergo review for promotion to the rank of Professor at any point in the three-year cycle of salary reviews regularly conducted by the Faculty Salary Committee. At the end of a review for promotion to Professor, consistent with other faculty reviews, the Personnel Committee will establish a merit score for that faculty member according to the rating system used by the Budget Committee. In the year following review for promotion to Professor, the faculty member will enter a new three-year review cycle with the merit score set by Personnel Committee. However, if there is an overlap of one or two years between the old and new cycles, the merit score that determines salary increment during the overlapping period shall be the higher of the two.

Like other long-serving faculty members, the regular Assistant and Associate Professors on six-year renewable contracts (P.E. and Library) will have merit scores established on a three year rotation. For them, merit scores are set by the Personnel Committee in years of their six-year interim reviews for contract renewal, and by the Faculty Salary Committee at the three-year midpoint of this contract cycle. Tenure-track Assistant Professors and other regular, continuing faculty members not on six-year contracts will normally have their merit scores established by the Personnel Committee as a part of the contract renewal or promotion review process. All faculty merit scores are then used by the Faculty Salary Committee in calculating the merit portion of annual salary increases.