

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MISSISSAUGA PTR Process – Guidelines and Best Practices

These guidelines offer some general principles and best practices around administering the PTR process. Each department has its own culture and we recognize that distinctive cultures will inform and differentiate practices and processes in each unit. This document is intended to help you choose options that will suit your local practice while increasing clarity in your communication about that process to your colleagues and ensuring that you adhere to policies and best practices.

Your faculty members 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. It is critical that teaching stream staff and part-time teaching staff receive different letters/memoranda from tenure-stream staff because of the relative weighting of teaching, service and either research (tenure- stream) or pedagogical / professional development (teaching-stream) will differ markedly.

The letters/memoranda should contain information on the following areas.

1. Membership of the PTR Committee

Ultimately the PTR decision and allocation is the responsibility of the Chair. It is strongly advisable to have a PTR committee that is advisory to the Chair. There are a number of ways this committee might be constituted. A model that might work well for UTM departments would include the Chair, the Associate Chair (if applicable) and one or two more senior colleagues. Alternatively, you could strike a committee composed of yourself and 2-3 senior colleagues. If you are a multi-discipline unit, it is generally recommended that you have a representative from each discipline on the committee. If you have a number of teaching-stream faculty, it is generally wise to have an Associate Professor, Teaching Stream on the committee. For all departments, it is important that you have members who, collectively, will help you to assess all elements of a candidate's performance, including research, teaching, and service. Given the size of our departments, keep your PTR advisory committee small (3 – 4 members).

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. Departments sometimes make this explicit in their 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.

Consultation with Graduate Chairs:

For tenure-stream faculty, consultation with graduate chairs is a critical element of the information-gathering process for PTR assessments. You will find their views to be especially valuable in 'hybrid' departments in which you might have only 3 or 4 members of a given discipline (who in turn might be outside your own). The graduate chair will be instrumental in helping you assess their activities in relation to others in their field. For all faculty who are involved in graduate teaching, the graduate chairs' perspective on an individual's graduate teaching and supervision (most emphatically when one or both of these is done on the St. George campus) can be an important factor in the PTR assessment. Bear in mind though that that the rating you assign is ultimately your decision: it must be defensible and well-informed, particularly in the event of a grievance.

2. The Communication of the Formula for Assessment

2.1 Tenure-Stream Staff

The relative weight of teaching, service and research/creative professional achievement (tenure-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 tenure-stream 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 formulae 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.

2.2 Teaching-Stream Staff

For those units employing Teaching-stream staff, 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. It should be noted that regardless of teaching performance/activity, pedagogical/professional development activity must also be recognized and rewarded each year.

Some examples of relevant pedagogical/professional development activity include:

- participation at and contributions to academic conferences where sessions on pedagogical research and technique are prominent;
- teaching-related activity by the candidate outside of his/her classroom functions and responsibilities;
- professional work that allows the staff member to maintain a mastery of his or her subject area, provided that such professional work enhances directly the teaching mission of the staff's academic unit and UTM; and
- the ongoing pursuit of further academic qualifications.

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. One chair communicates the process as follows:

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.

Another states:

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 have a few of your colleagues have an outstanding year at the same time.

There will be 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 a new member of the pool.

4. Assessment Criteria and Weighting

4.1 Research and Creative Professional Achievement

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 some cases, recognition is split between the two categories. Each option is acceptable provided faculty members are informed of the weighting. There are obvious advantages to following the practice in your graduate department, if you have just one graduate department corresponding to your UTM department.

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, 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 differently 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 the prestige attached to each.

The judgment 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 should 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. Many departments employ 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's norm
0	=	no research activity

ii) 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. ***You must communicate the timing of the credit for these activities.***

All faculty must be aware of how and when the credit is allocated and that previous credit must be 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 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, ***you must communicate the timing (including any statutes of limitation). 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.

4.2 The Assessment of Teaching

Student survey results, 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, weight 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 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

4.3 Service

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, UTM, the 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.

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.

5. 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 has defined this process as follows:

Staff members ...who are on research and study leave during 20-XX-20XX 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 leave and unit heads should use their discretion in such situations in determining what recognition is warranted in the PTR determination.

6. Staff on Unpaid Leave

Academics who are on unpaid leave do not normally receive a PTR increase. The Activity Report reporting year May 1 - April 30 does not exactly coincide with the academic year July 1- 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 in July 1 to December 30 period or the January 1-June 30 period, PTR should be pro-rated to 50%.

7. Staff on Maternity Leave

The provisions are as follows:

With respect to PTR, the principle of no professional disadvantage should prevail. 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.

8. Part-time Staff

Part-time academic staff with appointments of over 25% receive PTR as well as ATB. Please ensure that all part-time staff are included so that central funding for their increases will be provided.

All academic staff should receive a letter from the Chair informing them of their PTR award. The letter should include comment 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. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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 him/her should indicate that he/she has 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.