



Office of the Chair and Graduate Chair

DPES 2011-18 2011 PTR

From: William A. Gough, Chair, DPES

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By now most, if not all of you, will have received your 2011 PTR letter. This memo is intended to explain somewhat the process.

Increment to faculty salaries comes in two main forms, PTR and ATB. PTR is an acronym for "Progress Through the Ranks" and is considered merit pay. Each faculty member "attracts" PTR funds which are pooled. A small percentage (5%) is made available to the Dean for PTR for Chairs and Vice-Deans and Associate Deans as well as Dean's Merit Awards (more on this later).

For reference, there are four basic salary categories, two each for lecturers and research faculty. For each of these groups, there is "Above the Breakpoint" and "Below the Breakpoint". These two categories are based on the previous year's salary. More PTR funds are available per capita for the Below the Breakpoint than Above the Breakpoint. The Breakpoint is different for lecturers and research faculty and is adjusted annually.

The PTR process requires evaluation and ranking. ATB is "across the board" which is a percentage increase based on your existing salary, largely designed to offset the ravages of inflation.

This year we are going forward with the PTR award, as your letters indicate. These increases will be effective on your July pay (July 28th). ATB is dependent on the ongoing negotiations between the University and UTFA (University of Toronto Faculty Association). UTFA is not a union per se but acts on the behalf of the faculty in these types of negotiations and is a resource to faculty if there is perceived (and actual) unfair treatment in most aspects of academic life. The ATB award is being negotiated in the context of provincial legislation which constrains wage increase in the public sector.

Now I wish to outline the 2011 PTR process in DPES and some departures from our traditional approach. This year I convened three PTR committees and I sat on all three.

One committee examined in isolation the P&A (Physics and Astrophysics) group as part of a series of autonomy steps in recognition of their proto-departmental status. This has the Dean's approval. A second committee reviewed the lecturers in chemistry and environmental science and a third group reviewed research faculty in these two groups.

The ranking process was facilitated by using the standard scoring system of 10 points, with 4 allocated to research, 4 to teaching for teaching and two for service. This was the case for most faculty members. Exceptions occurred for those who have been on research leave and those taking on administrative roles. The latter are negotiated on an individual basis. The committees reviewed annual activity reports and teaching evaluations and through discussion came to a consensus score. These scores are then used to proportionally divide up the merit pool. The pool for Physics and Astrophysics was separated from the remainder. The scoring thus acts as a weighted ranking system.

In addition Chairs are asked to recommend an additional financial award called the Dean's Merit Award. This is added to the PTR award and becomes part of the base salary. These awards are reserved for individuals who have had a particularly productive year or have received recognition for outstanding achievement.

In the past both the PTR financial award as well as the scores out of ten and in recent years the specific breakdown for each component were reported. This detail of reporting was anomalous at UTSC. No other department provides this detail except CMS does report the score out of ten, no doubt a cultural remnant stemming from our shared past. Many have found the scoring aspect confusing, even demoralizing. This could arise because the score is not absolute but relative to those in your salary category and the relative "severity" of the PTR committee. Thus it was possible a "better year" garnered a lower score out of ten than a less productive year. My own experience is that my score out of ten has fluctuated more than the actual monetary award indicating my relative status "within the herd" has not changed much. A final point is that nominally a score of 5/10 means a faculty member is meeting expectations, however, such a score within the evaluative context we inhabit on a daily basis with students is a borderline pass and represents a poor performance. All our faculty members are "A"s and are a result of a highly competitive hiring process and thus scores in the 5 to 8 range although indicate exceeding expectations, are below the typical performance of our faculty from the evaluative framework they have existed in all their careers and may result in conveying an unintended negative impression. Thus, in consultation with some of my Associate Chairs, I am discontinuing the practice of reporting the scores out of ten and will report the financial reward and relevant histograms for the salary category.

I am of course available to discuss the PTR award on an individual basis.