

April 28, 2004

SURVEY: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MERIT PAY?

As part of the review of Queen's existing salary policy¹ by QUFA's Salary Review Committee to prepare for bargaining for a new collective agreement beginning in December 2004, we are polling members' attitudes about the merit pay system. At Queen's we receive, in addition to across-the-board scale increases, an annual career development or "progress-through-the-ranks" (PTR) increase. While this can vary according to the faculty member's merit score, it is misleading to call the whole PTR increase "merit pay," as PTR is a natural consequence of greater experience rather than particularly meritorious performance. In this bulletin, what we mean by merit pay is the value of the extra merit points that go to those with merit scores above 10. If there were no merit pay system, that would *not* mean the end of PTR increases: rather, these extra points could be used to raise the standard PTR increase that would go to everyone.

Annual merit assessments, made by Deans with the assistance of the Heads, are translated into merit scores: 10 is both the most common score (the mode) and the score received by the faculty member who is in the exact middle of the merit ranking (the median). Those whose performance is judged superior may receive scores of 12, 15, or even 20, while those who fall short may receive scores of 7 or less. While both the *median* and *modal* merit scores are 10, the *average* in 2003 was 10.89, and the distribution of merit scores was:

20:	0.3%	of faculty
15:	8%	"
12:	28%	"
10:	61%	"
7 or less::	3%	"

This year (2004), a merit score of 10 will translate into a PTR increase of ca. \$2365 (before any abatements).

We want to know faculty views on various aspects of this system, in order to prepare for next year's bargaining. This is the first of a series of questionnaires on salary policy: later ones will deal with other issues, such as senior abatements and junior increments.

¹"Reviewing Our Salary Policy" QUFACTS January 30, 2004
(See QUFA's website <<http://www.queensu.ca/qufa/QUFACTS/2003-2004/Policybul.htm>>)

Please answer the following seven (7) questions and return this bulletin via campus mail to the QUFA office, Room 120, Old Medical Building, by Wednesday, May 12th.

1) The Principle of Merit Pay:

The value of offering monetary rewards for those judged to be superior performers has been much debated in the scholarly literature. While it may have the advantage of encouraging greater effort among all employees, some studies also have shown that it erodes morale among those who receive merit awards below the “average” (who include, at Queen’s, those who receive scores of 10), but consider themselves to be working hard and performing well.

Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing your view on whether the annual career development/PTR increment should vary with merit or not?

Please circle one letter only.

- a) I am happy with the current system.
- b) I am not wholly happy with the current system but believe it can be made to work by some improvements.
- c) I do not believe there should be monetary rewards for merit; PTR increases should not vary with merit scores.
- d) In principle, I support the idea of merit pay, but I do not think that it is likely that a fair way of allocating it can be implemented.
- e) I support the idea of rewarding merit, but the rewards should be in a form other than larger PTR increases (e.g. lump-sum payments, research grants, other forms of recognition).

Regardless of your views on the principle of merit pay, please complete the rest of this survey!

2) Your Own Response to Merit Pay:

Please indicate all the statements that you agree with by circling the relevant letter/s:

- a) The extra salary that a higher merit score entails is an incentive for me to work harder or better.
- b) What motivates me to work harder or better is not merit pay, but other factors (e.g. professional pride, desire for the esteem of colleagues and students, interest in the subject, or other).
- c) I do not care much about the monetary aspect of merit pay, but it is important to me as a symbol that my work here is recognized and valued.
- d) The merit pay system reduces my morale and commitment to this University by sending me the message that my work is not valued as it should be.
- e) I basically pay little attention to the whole process.

3) Criteria for Merit Awards:

Many contend that research is rewarded far more than teaching in Canadian universities. It is argued that it is much easier to measure research output than the quality of teaching or service. Hence, even if teaching and research are given the same nominal weight, research will matter more because there is more variability in research scores. To help correct this tendency, our current collective agreement provides that at least 30% of scores over 10 must be due predominantly to teaching or service (Article 42.2.2.9).

Below, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- a) More weight should be given to teaching in awarding merit pay. Agree Disagree
- b) Student opinion surveys (e.g. USAT) should be the primary method of assessing teaching performance. Agree Disagree
- c) Merit assessments of teaching and service should reflect the quality rather than the quantity of work; quantity should be compensated in other ways. Agree Disagree

4. Size and Distribution of Merit Awards:

Those judged particularly meritorious receive scores of 12 or 15 (very rarely 20) - i.e., 2 or 5 extra merit points. As we noted above, ca. 28% of faculty receive 2 extra merit points, worth ca. \$473, ca. 8% receive 5 extra points, worth ca. \$1183, and these are permanent salary increases that last for the recipient's entire career.

Please circle one answer for each part:

- a) The value of the *extra* points for merit is Too large About right Too small
- b) The number of faculty who currently receive the extra points for merit is Too large About right Too small
- c) Merit assessments of teaching and service should reflect the quality rather than the quantity of work; quantity should be compensated in other ways. Agree Disagree

5. Decision-making on Merit:

Currently the Deans are responsible for merit assessments (Article 29.2.2), though they often rely on the Heads' recommendations in departmentalized faculties. Who do you think should carry out merit assessments?

Please circle only one letter only.

- a) The Deans, as at present.
- b) The Heads, with the Deans retaining a pool to distribute to departments with more superior performers.
- c) An elected committee of colleagues in the department or faculty.
- d) Other (please specify):

6. Frequency of Merit Assessments:

At present, merit assessments are conducted annually. It is often argued that this frequency cannot properly account for longer-term projects such as monographs, and that it may reflect only temporary variations in performance.

Please indicate the statement that most closely reflects your view (circle one letter only):

- a) I agree with the practice of annual assessments
- b) Assessments should be every two years
- c) Assessments should be every three years
- d) Assessments should be at longer intervals (*please specify:*) _____ /years
- e) Meritorious performance should be rewarded at the time it occurs, whenever that is in the academic year (e.g. on the publication of a major work, on completing a very well-taught course)

7. Comments:

Please add any comments you have about merit pay and merit assessment. If you require more space please attach an additional sheet.

8. General information:

Gender: Male Female
Rank: Lecturer Assistant Associate Professor

Faculty: _____

Thank you for your participation on this survey. Our job is to represent our members, but to do so we need to have a clear idea of your opinions.