

GUIDELINES¹

for the University of Connecticut School of Medicine Academic Merit Plan Review

Revised and Approved by the Merit Plan Executive Committee November 2022

Applicability:

All faculty must be evaluated annually under the By-laws of the University of Connecticut². This document provides the guidelines for that evaluation for those faculty members who are not evaluated annually by some other mechanism (*e.g.* managerial/confidential).

The Executive Committee

The administrative body for the plan is the Merit Plan Executive Committee. Responsibilities of the Executive Committee include:

- Development of processes to implement the principles
- Development and adjustment of rules
- Oversight of the Plan

The Executive Committee will consist of 10 voting members:

Members who serve for the duration of their appointments:

1. Senior Associate Dean for Education
2. Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs
3. Senior Associate Dean for Research Planning and Coordination
4. Two members of the Oversight Committee who are not department chairs or Type II center directors. One shall be the chair of the Oversight Committee unless the chair is a department chair or Type II center director. The second member (or both members, if the chair is a department chair or Type II center director) shall be elected by the Oversight Committee.
5. One member of the Clinical Council, elected by the Clinical Council (not a department chair or Type II center director).

Members who serve for not more than two consecutive three-year terms:

1. One basic science chair, elected by the basic science chairs
2. One clinical chair, elected by the clinical chairs

The remainder of the members may not be department chairs and may not serve more than two consecutive three-year terms:

1. One faculty member from a basic science department, elected by the faculty of the basic science departments
2. One faculty member from a clinical department, elected by the faculty of the clinical departments

The Executive Committee has one non-voting *Ex Officio* member.

¹ Revised to reflect the new SOM Bylaws and approved by SOM Council, October, 2005.

² XIV.D.4.(a) and (b)

The administrator of the Academic Merit Plan, appointed by the dean, may attend all meetings of the Merit Plan Executive Committee, but is not a member of the committee and may not vote.

The Merit Plan Executive Committee may elect its own chair for a one-year term, not to exceed four consecutive terms. In addition, it determines the role of the Plan Administrator in the operation of the Executive Committee meetings.

In the event that a department chair is not eligible for election because he/she is not on UConn payroll, the vice-chair of the department may be a candidate provided he or she meets the eligibility criteria.

An associate dean may appoint a senior faculty member to represent himself/herself for the purpose of completing the reviews, but must attend policy meetings. The representative must be managerial exempt.

The Plan Administrator

The Plan Administrator will ensure that the Academic Merit Plan is executed consistent with the guidelines.

Specific duties include but are not limited to:

1. Coordinates the academic evaluation process;
2. Brings before the Executive Committee issues regarding procedures/processes;
3. Brings before the Executive Committee directly recommendations for values, limits and/or amendments to ensure the fair and orderly functioning of the Plan; and
4. Periodically reports to the Executive Committee and to the dean regarding the productivity of its members.

Evaluation Criteria for All Faculty in the Plan

Academic merit is earned in the areas of education, research, and administrative duties related to academic pursuit.

The chair's recommendation for academic merit will be made after reviewing the criteria for research, education, administration, transition and excellence. The current evaluation criteria are published in the Academic Merit Plan website. There is a link to this site in the Faculty Handbook.

[RESEARCH](#)

[EDUCATION](#)

[ADMINISTRATION](#)

[TRANSITION](#)

[EXCELLENCE](#)

Specifics of the Evaluation

The evaluation process has four steps:

1. Preparation of data and completion of annual faculty profile packets.
2. Meeting with chair and center director if appropriate, determination of merit ratings, and setting of expectations for the upcoming year.
3. Transmittal of a complete package to the Merit Plan Executive Committee.
4. Review of evaluations by the Executive Committee for consistency across departments. This may involve further communication with the chairs in the case of concerns regarding inconsistency.

The following paragraphs provide the details of those steps listed above.

1. **Preparation of Data.** The data are submitted to the Merit Plan Executive Committee in packets. The packet has 3 parts: the detail material, the face sheet, and an Expectations Form for the following Academic year.

Detail Material. The Academic Merit Plan packet must be processed in the net-enabled CFAR application, which pre-populates much of the information and exports it to a Word document. The Word document can then be amended/edited to complete the Expectations and Administrative Other sections.

The detail package information is to be filled out by the faculty and either brought to the evaluation or sent to the chair/center director ahead of time. It must be typewritten and the type size must be 10 points or greater. All information must pertain only to the index year's data. Papers "in press" may be listed.

Published papers may be listed as well if they have not been listed in the previous year as "in press". When an "in press" paper is listed, next to it should be the date of acceptance for publication.

Following the annual review with the department chair/center director, the completed detail package must be submitted electronically and as hard copy to the Academic Merit Plan Administrator.

Face Sheet

The face sheet contains:

- The individual faculty member's name.
- A scoring grid, organized into columns, indicating the percentage effort for Education, Research, Administrative, Transition and Excellence and Clinical time, all of which sum to 100% of the total School of Medicine (SOM) FTE. Excellence must not exceed 10%.
- An indication of the portion of the individual's total time devoted to SOM effort; that is the SOM FTE.
- The individual's start date and current academic rank.
- A signatures section.

If, in the course of the evaluation process, the chair/center director or faculty member should identify any inaccuracy/discrepancies in the face sheet data, a note with the necessary corrections should be attached to the face sheet and transmitted to the Plan Administrator when the completed

packet is submitted. The chair/center director will indicate, for each of the five categories (Education, Research, Administrative, Transition and Excellence), whether the individual's performance has been "Not Acceptable", "Marginal", "Acceptable", or "Superior". The judgment will be based substantially on guidelines published by the Academic Merit Plan. In addition, the chair/center director has/have latitude in including additional relevant supporting information. Each of these individual evaluations is weighted by the percent effort for the category. On that basis, the chair/center director will then assign an aggregate evaluation.

At the bottom of the face sheet there is a place for the signature of both the faculty and the chair/center director, indicating that they have discussed predatory journals and the evaluation in person.

Expectations Form

The Expectations Form is a discussion tool for the chair/center director and the faculty member and should be completed by each faculty member and brought to the meeting with the chair/center director.

2. The second step is the meeting of the chair/center director or his/her designee with the faculty member. The meetings are to be scheduled and carried out at the start of the calendar year and the packet submitted to the Merit Plan Executive Committee administrative office when complete. The chair/center director/designee must meet with each faculty person personally, discuss the past year's performance and must arrive at a rating. If the chair/center director's final recommendation is "Superior", "Marginal" or "Not Acceptable" performance, the chair/center director must provide a written justification, including any extenuating circumstance or issue for consideration.
3. The third step in the evaluation process is the transmittal of the data to the Merit Plan Executive Committee. A document will be considered complete if:
 - The relevant forms have been filled out appropriately.
 - The scoring grid is complete and includes an aggregate score.
 - Signatures from both the faculty and chair/center director indicating that a person-to-person conversation has taken place.Expectations Form for the following year is completed by all faculty. For any evaluation of "Not Acceptable" performance, "Marginal" performance or "Superior" performance, the chair/center director has provided a narrative document justifying this evaluation. The chair/center director is free to, and is encouraged to submit a narrative justification of "Acceptable" performance. Although this is not required, it may help the Executive Committee review and may avoid a subsequent request to the chair/center director for further justification of the "Acceptable" rating.
4. The final step is the Merit Plan Executive Committee review for consistency among departments. Recommendations of "Not Acceptable" performance, "Marginal" performance, or "Superior" performance will be reviewed by the committee. If the committee feels that further justification for the recommendation of "Acceptable" performance is necessary, it may request supporting data from the chair/center director. The Executive Committee will review the file, including the chair/center director's letter of justification for "Superior", "Not Acceptable", or "Marginal" performance. If the committee disagrees with the evaluation, it will recommend a different rating and refer the file to the dean for decision.

Ratings of “Acceptable” do not normally require justification.

In the event that the performance was rated as “Acceptable” by the chair/center director, and, having met with the chair/center director, the faculty member disagrees with the chair’s rating, the faculty member may request that the Executive Committee review the evaluation. The request must come within 30 days of the meeting with the chair.

In the event that the performance was rated as “Acceptable” by the chair/center director, and the committee feels the performance is either “Marginal” or “Not Acceptable”, the file will be referred back to the chair/center director for a letter of justification to support the chair/center director’s rating against the lower rating suggested by the committee. If the committee still disagrees, after review of the chair/center director’s justification of “Acceptable” performance, the file is referred to the dean.

If the final result after the dean’s review differs from the original evaluation, both the faculty member and the chair/center director will be notified in writing with a brief description of the reasons. That notification will signify the beginning of the 30 day period during which an appeal will be accepted.

At the conclusion of the process, the Executive Committee will have examined the documents for consistency across departments, and will have requested or made adjustments as appropriate.

If a faculty member refuses to submit a signed package to the chair/center director, performance will be automatically determined to be “Not Acceptable”. If the package is not submitted to the department or center by the published due date, the Academic Merit Plan office will contact the faculty member and offer seven (7) days of grace. If the package is not received by then, the faculty member will be considered to have refused.

Both the Executive Committee and the dean will evaluate only the data and commentary that have been submitted as part of the package. The committee will not consider material added after the package has been submitted.

Role of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee’s role is not to substitute its judgment for the judgment of the chair/center director. It is the view of the committee that no one knows faculty member’s performance as well as the chair/center director. The committee’s job is not to impose its evaluation over the chair/center director’s evaluation, but rather to ensure that the evaluation process and criteria used are consistent across departments.

- The Executive Committee reserves the right to upgrade the rating of any individual to ensure consistency without consultation with the dean.
- The Executive Committee cannot downgrade the rating of any individual; it can only recommend downgrades to the dean.

The annual merit review may be used as one variable in determining salary and lump sum payments as consistent with established collective bargaining agreements.

Appeals

– Role of the Executive Committee in an Appeal

The Executive Committee may review requests for reconsideration based on departure from procedure or based on failed communication of the chair/center director's intent, but will not review the substance of the appeal.

– Role of the Appeals Committee

Appeals regarding the substance of an evaluation, perceived bias, or other non-procedural issues are reviewed by the SOM Academic Merit Plan Appeals Committee. The SOM Academic Merit Plan Appeals Committee is elected by the faculty of the SOM. The membership of the SOM Academic Merit Plan Appeals Committee is outlined in Appendix I and its Rules and Procedures are listed in Appendix II.

APPENDIX I THE SOM ACADEMIC MERIT PLAN APPEALS COMMITTEE

AN APPEALS COMMITTEE AND APPEALS PROCEDURE FOR THE SOM FACULTY ACADEMIC MERIT PLAN

An Appeals Committee will be formed by the election of seven (7) faculty members from the SOM. It will be called the **SOM Academic Merit Plan Appeals Committee**. It is charged with hearing appeals and grievances that arise from the Academic Merit Plan for the SOM.

Outline of the Appeal Procedure

1. Appeals related to annual merit ratings must be made directly to the Appeals Committee within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the written notification of the decision.
2. The Appeals Committee will make a determination of the merit of an appeal and will make a recommendation to the dean of the SOM for final action. Materials additional to those submitted to the Executive Committee may be considered by the Appeals Committee, provided there is reasonable justification as to why they were not submitted originally.
3. Further appeals are possible to the Health Center Appeals Committee and the Health Center Board of Directors as defined by the By-laws of the University.

Membership

Three members of the SOM Academic Merit Plan Appeals Committee will be from basic science departments and four members will be from clinical departments. All full-time SOM faculty who are covered by the annual Academic Merit Plan are eligible to serve on the Appeals Committee except those who serve on the Executive Committee of the Academic Merit Plan, or the Health Center Appeals Committee, and deans of any rank, department chairs, and Type II center directors. Members will serve for a three-year term with one-third of the committee elected each year. Members may serve no more than two terms consecutively. The Dean's Council will oversee an election to select the membership of the Appeals Committee.

APPENDIX II

RULES AND PROCEDURES OF THE SOM ACADEMIC MERIT PLAN APPEALS COMMITTEE

A. The Appellant:

1. Must submit a written appeal with all supporting documents to the office of Faculty Affairs within 30 calendar days of receiving written notification of his/her merit rating and/or merit award. Exceptions may be made by the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs (SADFFA) for extraordinary circumstances (i.e. delayed notification, leave, illness, etc.).
2. May request a committee member recuse him or herself for conflict of interest.
3. Is responsible for ensuring that all pertinent materials related to the appeal are submitted to the SADFFA.

Supporting documents must include the following from the year pertaining to the appeal:

- a. an explanation of the appellant's reason(s) for submitting the appeal (maximum one page),
- b. the appellant's annual merit forms,
- c. the letter notifying the appellant of the final merit rating,
- d. the chair or center director's justification for the original rating, if submitted initially to the Executive Committee,
- e. additional materials as outlined in Appendix I, #2 Appeals Procedure, and the justification for their absence in the original merit packet submission.

B. The Committee:

1. Will ask its members if any should recuse themselves;
2. Will meet as needed to hear appeals;
3. A quorum (five or more voting members) will be required for a meeting to take place. A majority vote will be necessary to forward a recommendation to the dean.
4. Each committee member will review all submitted materials;
5. Will have access to and may review the details of the merit review procedures from other members of the applicant's division/department/center and for other members of the SOM;
6. Reserves the right to interview the appellant, appellant's chair/center director, and anyone who might provide pertinent information related to the process of an appeal;

7. Will attempt to render a decision within 60 days of receiving an appeal and all supporting documents. The committee will render a decision on an appeal no more than 180 days after an appeal and all supporting documents are received by the committee.

Once the Appeals Committee has voted, its recommendation to the dean will be sent, in writing, with a rationale, to the SADFFA, as liaison for the grievance process. The SADFFA will convey the recommendation to the dean of the SOM. Once the dean has rendered a decision to accept or reject the recommendation, the SADFFA will give the Appeals Committee's recommendation, together with the dean's decision, to the appellant, Academic Merit Plan Administrator, and appropriate department chair/center director will be notified in writing. Further appeal to the Health Center Appeals Committee must be initiated within 30 calendar days of being notified of the dean's decision. In addition, if the outcome affects salary or merit pay, the Chief Financial Officer of the SOM, Payroll and AAUP will be notified.

Updated to align timeline for further appeal with timeline for initial appeal, by Dean's Office (Faculty Affairs) on September 17, 2018.