

Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

APPENDIX 3: Geography Non-Tenure Track Merit Process and Rating System

Approved by faculty vote June 4, 2021.

The Merit Process

1. The following procedures apply to non-tenure track (NTT) faculty members, which includes in-residence faculty, academic assistants, visiting assistant professors (VAPs) with consecutive appointments, and other non-tenure track positions represented by the AAUP. The portion of the total merit pool allocated to non-tenure track faculty is proportional to their share of total AAUP bargaining unit member salaries.
2. To be eligible for merit, the Head must first determine that a faculty member or academic assistant has performed satisfactorily according to the requirements and responsibilities stated in their contract during the period for which merit is determined. This will vary by position, but generally entails meeting at least one of the following conditions: having an active research record as evidenced by publications, presentations, or grant submissions; attending to assigned teaching responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner; and / or meeting assigned service responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner.
3. The departmental merit committee will review the files of faculty and academic assistants, as they do all tenure-track faculty. This ensures all members of the department have the opportunity to review the academic and professional accomplishments of the faculty and academic assistants.
4. The Merit Advisory Committee, according to the Geography Merit Process and Rating System document, will always have at least one non-tenure track representative. When the non-tenure track member of the merit committee is being reviewed by the Merit Advisory Committee, the previous non-tenure track representative of the Merit Advisory Committee will serve as an alternate for that committee member's review. This ensures that a non-tenure track

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member of the Department participates in review of every non-tenure track faculty member's merit package. If the previous member is not available, the Merit Advisory Committee will select a non-tenure track member from the remaining non-tenure track faculty in the department.

5. All faculty and academic assistants wishing to be considered for merit must submit their requests to the Department Head in digital form using the deadline set annually for submitting their Husky DM report. The merit request for applicants consists of: 1) a brief description of the applicant's contractual obligations; 2) a short, one or two-page narrative that identifies and justifies outstanding activities in the previous 12 months (generally June 1 through May 31), using the general headers Research, Teaching and Service as appropriate; and 3) a copy of the report generated by the Husky DM system, using a format and style agreed upon in advance. The applicant should also recommend the category of merit they believe best reflects their record, selecting from the following: strong merit, excellent merit, or exceptional merit (Table 1).
 - a. Given the wide range of positions which fall under this policy, it is important to recognize the baseline contract and evaluate each applicant with respect to their contractual obligations. The merit applicant should be trusted to summarize their contractual obligations, with the Department Head providing clarity when needed in their role as non-voting head of the Merit Committee.
 - b. In preparing the narrative, particular attention should be paid to making sure that items are not repeated from previous years, unless they represent continuing, meritorious activity in that category (e.g., editorship of a journal, a multi-year grant, etc.). If a publication has been listed as published in a previous year then it cannot be listed again in a subsequent year.
 - c. We recognize that there is historic bias in how some groups (particularly women and faculty of color) self-assess on their accomplishments. The self-selected Merit category should be treated as a starting point in the discussion of a merit

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package and can be revised and will be further refined by the Merit Advisory Committee (see Points 6 & 7).

6. The Head transmits the merit applications to the Merit Advisory Committee and makes these reports available to all faculty in the department. Each member of the Merit Advisory Committee reads and categorically rates all merit applications, selecting a category of strong merit, excellent merit, or exceptional merit (Table 1) for each applicant. The Merit Advisory Committee should do its utmost to make sure all accomplishments of each applicant are accounted for by thoroughly reviewing their narrative, HuskyDM report, self-assessed merit category, and supplemental material in relation to their contractual obligations and responsibilities. Committee members will not evaluate their own merit application. Only documented materials relating to research, teaching and service, as appropriate, should be used in rating applications. The committee can ask for clarifications and additional materials from faculty members as needed. The members of the committee submit their selected merit category for each applicant to the Head.

7. The Head compiles all of the merit categories selected for applicants, reports the set of individual committee member categories to the other committee members in an anonymous manner, and calls a meeting of the Merit Advisory Committee to discuss the ratings. The Merit Advisory Committee will then discuss each merit application, debate the majority merit category determined in the report, and further refine the merit category by debating if the candidate should be in the high or low part of the category for the purposes of their merit weight (Table 2). Committee members may not be involved in the discussion of their own applications, with the merit applicant replaced by an alternate from the non-tenure track pool during the discussion of their application (see Point 4). Following the discussion of all applications, the merit categories will be recast using the categories found in Table 2 and tallied by the Head. It is the second set of scores that will be used to allocate merit pay. The rating system below is designed to encourage consensus among committee members as to the level of merit that is appropriate, but in cases where the committee is not able to come to agreement on a refined merit category, the majority category will be used. During its discussions, the committee may also seek to identify particular

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individuals and activities that may be deserving of additional merit pay from the Dean or Provost.

8. The final merit category for each applicant will be assigned a merit weight according to Table 2. The merit weights are summed across all applicants and a percent is calculated for each applicant (Individual Merit Weight/Sum of all Merit Weights * 100). This value represents the applicant's final merit score. In years in which no merit pay is available, the merit review procedure will proceed as scheduled, unless directed otherwise by the Dean's or Provost's pools. In such cases, the department will follow AAUP guidelines for awarding merit in subsequent years.
9. The final merit categories and scores will be provided to each applicant in an anonymous manner, but in such a way that all faculty members can see their category and score relative to the other members of the NTT faculty. If an applicant feels that their final merit category and calculated score does not reflect their contributions, they can write to the Head and ask to have their score reviewed by the Merit Advisory Committee. In this situation, the applicant should detail why they disagree with the refined merit category.
10. If a revision is made, the revised categories and resulting merit awards will be provided to the individual faculty in an anonymous manner, but in such a way that all faculty members can see their category relative to others in the department.

The Rating System

This section describes the criteria used to evaluate non-tenure track faculty productivity in research, teaching, and service, as appropriate based on contractual obligations and responsibilities. The goals of this rating system are to: 1) Reward colleagues for exceptional, meritorious accomplishments; 2) Encourage colleagues to strive toward the highest possible goals from year to year; 3) Support faculty in advancing their career plans; and 4) Continue to build a strong graduate and undergraduate program.

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In light of the diversity of positions within the non-tenure track category, the merit system for these faculty is based on an ordinal classification that summarizes across all activities and recognizes accomplishments that go above and beyond the applicant’s contract. These categories consist of strong meritorious activity, excellent meritorious activity, and exceptional meritorious activity (Table 1). The applicant will select a merit category that they believe best summarizes their accomplishments (see Point 5) and the Merit Advisory Committee will select a merit category from Table 1 during the initial review (see Point 6).

Table 1 provides examples that can be used to guide the interpretation of Merit Categories, but it is important to recognize that the provided examples will vary by applicant depending on their position and contractual obligations. For example, an applicant who has an In-residence position, in general, will have a higher teaching load and lower research and service expectations. Their merit application should be interpreted in this context.

Merit Category	Examples of merit for this category
Strong Merit	Demonstrates improvement in evaluations; receives small, internal, teaching award; made substantial revisions to a class; taught a larger than normal load of difficult classes (large size, W, Q); advises multiple internships/independent studies; develops a new class in area of expertise; attends multiple professional development opportunities and demonstrates application; presents teaching workshops for CETL, at conferences etc.; serves on multiple committees at the department, University, and society level; serves as head of a department committee; serves on a prominent University committee (e.g. Academic Senate, GEOC) or in a leadership role of a specialty group; advises multiple students; serves on professionally relevant community committees; receives small research grant (<\$20K); publishes white paper or proceedings/presents at multiple conferences in a year; co-author/PI on peer-reviewed paper or modest

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	research grant; serves on graduate committees; co-chair of Ph.D. committee or head of masters committee
Excellent Merit	Develops new class that serves important role in the department; receives university teaching award; receives substantial grant for improving teaching; graduates masters or co-advised Ph.D. student; serves in leadership role on prominent University committee; leads major change in department; co-Pi on major grant, PI on modest grant; co-author on prominent paper; publishes multiple peer-reviewed papers in prominent journals
Exceptional Merit	Receives national teaching award; publishes national teaching curriculum; establishes new program (e.g. GIS Certificate); serves in a leadership role in national society or major University body (e.g. Academic Senate); principal investigator on major grant (>\$100K each year for multiple years); principal author on article in high visibility outlet like Science, Nature, central committee for IPCC report, etc.

Table 1: Categories of merit

Merit Score Calculation

The determination of a final merit score is based on a refined set of merit categories (Table 2) and associated merit weights. The refined merit category is selected for each candidate after the Merit Advisory Committee meets and discusses the applicant (see Point 7). As described in Point 7, the committee will either come to an agreement on a refined merit category for each applicant or the majority category will be used. Based on the final refined merit category, a merit weight will be assigned to each applicant and the merit score will be determined (see Point 8).

Table 2 assumes that all applicants are performing somewhat above their contracted duties at the low end of the Strong Merit category. Applicants at this level are given a weight of 1 and merit increases (or decreases) from there as shown in Table 2.

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Refined Merit Category	Merit Weight
No Merit	0
Reduced Merit (e.g. was away for part of the year and received Strong Merit for the rest)	0.5
Strong Merit (low)	1
Strong Merit (high)	1.25
Excellent Merit (low)	1.5
Excellent Merit (high)	1.75
Exceptional Merit (low)	2
Exceptional Merit (high)	2.25

Table 2: Merit weights for each refined category of merit

Applicants who receive Exceptional Merit, and in some cases Excellent Merit, should be nominated to receive additional merit from the Dean’s and Provost’s pools.

What Counts for Merit

Merit review assesses faculty accomplishments within a 12-month period (generally June 1 through May 31) unless instructed otherwise by CLAS under the AAUP/UConn contract. However, scholarly, scientific and academic work does not always fit neatly into this schedule and any discrepancies should be noted in the report to the Merit Advisory Committee, for example articles that carry an earlier or later publication date than the year in which they were released.

Grants are credited toward merit in the year in which they are awarded as well as in the subsequent years of the grant. This is true of other research and service commitments that extend over multiple years.