

Bargaining Bulletin #04

A review of SFU's merit and step system.

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As we are painfully aware, there has been no general wage increases for faculty members in the last two years. Consequently, the only increases to our salaries come about from our step-progression system. This article will look at a snapshot of our system based on information from the step awards and placement on 1 September 2011.

There are separate step review systems for Librarians and non-Librarians.

Teaching and research faculty are evaluated every two years. At this time the TPC (or TARC for Lectures and Senior Lecturers) reviews and provided advice to the Chair on a step-increment for each of the next two years – either 0, .5, 1.0, 1.5, or 2.0 steps with the proviso that the average step increase for the unit must be 1.3 or less. Then on September 1, the member moves up the salary scale by the recommended increment if the member is currently below the merit ceiling. If the member is above the merit ceiling but below the hard ceiling, the members moves up one step if the member receives a 1.5 step award; and 2 steps if the member receives a 2 step award. If the member is at the hard ceiling, no movement takes place regardless of the awarded step increment.

The step-increment system for Librarians differs. Every year, every Librarian receives a 1 step award unless there is demonstrated reason to reduce the award. No movement occurs if the Librarian is at the hard ceiling.

Table 1 summarizes the current step-on-our salary scale (<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/academic/a20-02.html>) by rank. The step placement EXCLUDES any market-differentials which can be quite large in several faculties (see Bargaining Bulletin 03). SFUFA has a more refined breakdown of the step placement by individual Faculties, but the trends seen in Table 1 also hold for the individual Faculties. About half of Lectures and Senior Lecturers are at the hard top of their scale. The step placement for Assistant Professors (aP) is well distributed as a consequence of the large amount of hiring in the last few years. About 30% of Associate Professors (AP) are at the hard ceiling, but many members get promoted and move upwards. About 1/3 of Full Professors (P) are at the hard top of the scale. About 1/2 of Librarians in earlier stages of their careers are at the hard ceilings, but all of the more senior Librarians are at their hard ceiling. Table 1 includes about 100 limited term appoints who tend not to be appointed at the hard ceilings and so the percentages at the hard ceiling for continuing appointments is greater. Over all, about 33% of all of our members are at the hard ceiling and receive no increment regardless of step award. Without changes to our salary scale, the percentage of members at the hard ceilings will increase over time.

Table 1. Summary of distribution of SFUFA members by step placement as of 2011-09-01. A * indicates a merit step; ** indicates maximum step in scale. Numbers include limited-term appointments.										
Step	Rank									
	Lec	S.Lec	Assnt Prof	Assoc Prof	Full Prof	Lib 1	Lib 2	Lib 3	Lib DH	Lib Assoc
1	3	.	.	.	.	5	1	.	.	.
2	6	1	3	.	.	**5	4	1	.	.
3	6	.	5	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
4	8	6	16	4	.	.	.	1	.	.
5	5	3	10	5	1	.	**4	2	.	.
6	8	7	15	15	3	.	.	2	.	.
7	8	5	18	25	3	.	.	3	.	.
8	10	5	23	32	10	.	.	4	.	**5
9	**38	6	22	36	7	.	.	1	.	.
10	.	9	32	80	13	.	.	1	.	.
11	.	**68	*21	*32	10	.	.	**9	**10	.
12	.	.	**16	**90	15	.	.	.	.	.
13	.	.	.	.	7	.	.	.	.	.
14	.	.	.	.	39	.	.	.	.	.
15	.	.	.	.	*17	.	.	.	.	.
16	.	.	.	.	*30	.	.	.	.	.
17	.	.	.	.	*19	.	.	.	.	.
18	.	.	.	.	*17	.	.	.	.	.
19	.	.	.	.	*23	.	.	.	.	.
20	.	.	.	.	**118	.	.	.	.	.
All	92	110	181	319	332	10	10	24	10	5
% at hard ceiling	44%	62%	9%	28%	35%	50%	40%	38%	100%	100%

* Indicates merit step.

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of step awards by rank. Less than 5% of faculty members received less than a 1-step award – according to your own peers, the number of faculty that is not performing at a satisfactory level or higher is very small. The average

award tends to increase with rank with a higher proportion of Full Professors receiving awards of 2.0 steps than other ranks.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of step awards by rank in 2011-09-01 regardless of step placement.					
Rank	Percentage of faculty with each step award				Avg Step Award
	<1	1.0	1.5	2.0	
Professor	1	30	51	18	1.43
Associate Professor	7	48	37	7	1.21
Assistant Professor*	7	36	41	16	1.33
Senior Lecturer	2	45	43	10	1.30
Lecturer**	8	75	17	0	1.00
Overall	4	40	43	13	1.32

* Includes Instructors.

** Includes Lab Instructors

Members at hard ceilings (the very top of each rank) are unable to progress regardless of what step award is received. Table 3 summarizes the step awards for these members. They basically received the same distribution of step awards as those members not at the hard ceilings.

Table 3. Percentage of step awards by rank for faculty at hard ceiling in 2011-09-01. Hard ceiling is top of scale and members are unable to progress regardless of step award.					
Rank	Percentage of faculty with each step award				Avg Step Award
	<1	1.0	1.5	2.0	
Professor	0	33	48	21	1.44
Associate Professor	3	55	39	3	1.21
Assistant Professor	0	100	0	0	1.00
Senior Lecturer	0	38	50	12	1.37
Lecturer	20	60	20	0	0.90
Total	1	43	40	15	1.35

Finally, the aP, AP, and P salary scales also include a merit ceiling. If a member is at or above the merit ceiling (but below the hard ceiling), the member only progresses if step awards of 1.5 or 2.0 are awarded. The distribution of step increases for these members is summarized in Table 4. The distribution is again similar to the other tables.

Table 4. Percentage of step awards by rank for faculty at merit ceiling on 2011-09-01.

Rank*	Percentage of faculty with each step award				Avg Step Award
	<1	1.00	1.50	2.00	
Professor	1	32	50	17	1.41
Associate Professor	16	48	29	8	1.12
Assistant Professor	0	33	67	0	1.33
Total	3	44	37	16	1.32

* Merit ceiling does not exist for ranks other than listed here.

Implications:

The above analysis only looks at the step placement ignoring any market differential. As many of us are aware, market differentials have severely distorted our salary system and the current scales are increasing irrelevant and need to be modified.

Step increases were the only source of salary movement for many of our members for the last two years. However, as Table 1 indicates, a large number of faculty are currently or will be reaching our hard ceilings in the next two years and have no chance for salary advancement regardless of job performance. Many of our sister universities either have no ceilings (e.g. UBC) or a much higher ceiling (e.g U.Waterloo). Our uncompetitive ceilings are a major reason why the relative position of salaries at SFU relative to the rest of Canada has been declining for the last 10 years (<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/~cschwarz/SFUFA/EBinfo/StatCan/anal-rank-mean.pdf>).

Lastly, it should be noted that the Board of Governors at SFU has made a clear policy decision to value administration over teaching and research. Senior Administrators have a 1.5 average for step increases, do not have half-sized increments as faculty do near the top of scale, and there are neither merit nor hard ceilings on their salaries.

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