

Idaho State
UNIVERSITY
College of Science and Engineering

ANNUAL FACULTY PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

ADOPTED: JANUARY 6, 2015

Preamble. The Idaho State Board of Education, Northwest Accreditation Commission, and ISU Procedure¹ require annual performance evaluations of all on-going faculty. Annual evaluation has three objectives. First, it sets standards for high quality performance within the mission and values of the University, which has critical value in faculty career development. Second, it provides a mechanism for awarding merit increases in salary for deserving faculty where applicable and pending institutional funding availability. Third, it assists department chairs in determining how best to utilize the strengths of their faculty to meet departmental needs. Although faculty participate in teaching, research, and service, in highly variable ways the actual balance of activities depends on the faculty member's workload, an item determined by the chair. This document provides guidelines that ensure fair and accurate evaluations that are consistent across the College. This document also provides clear expectations for the faculty and all persons involved in the evaluation process. Finally this document is advisory in nature, that is, it advises the Dean and Chairs towards best practice in carrying out annual performance evaluations.

Issues addressed by this document. The focus here is on the five-tier "Chair's evaluation of overall performance for the period under review" in Idaho State University's annual evaluation form. The five ratings—exceptional, above expectations, meets expectations, below expectations, and unacceptable—do not carry absolute definition, and yet the ratings can affect faculty member's careers.

Annual evaluation is one of the main tools by which chairs manage their departments and by which faculty report their work to the University. It requires study, contemplation, and judgment by the evaluators, and those being evaluated might not agree with the conclusions. The point of view in this document is that the process is necessary and that evaluators have an evident duty to be fair and accurate. The focus is not on those large issues but on the smaller one of assigning and using the five-tier ratings.

In the annual evaluation form, the rating is the last item before the chair's signature; the faculty member then signs off but has an opportunity to respond in writing. The Dean's evaluation of a faculty member may differ from the Chair's evaluation. If there is a difference, then the Dean informs the Chair of the difference prior to informing the faculty member. As with the Chair's evaluation, a faculty member has the opportunity to respond in writing to the Dean's evaluation. For clarity the full record of the evaluation moves forward to the Provost.

Problems and statement of solution. Overall ratings of faculty members can affect their careers. An important example arises in decisions of how to distribute merit pay raises. But in general any instance where overall ratings can affect careers requires separate, careful evaluation; the outcome is likely to be consistent with the yearly overall ratings of the faculty member, but those ratings can never substitute

¹ . ISU procedure is at http://www.isu.edu/acadaff/faculty_evaluations.shtml; Northwest Commission policy is located at <http://www.nwccu.org/Standards%20and%20Policies/Standard%202/Standard%20Two.htm>

for the slower and more careful process. In particular, a pattern of high ratings in one department relative to another is no indication that faculty in the first department perform better than those in the other. Were faculty in departments with higher ratings to benefit even to a small degree, the long-term effect would be inflated ratings with the consequence of less effective management in the College.

The similarity between the five-tier overall ratings and the superior/satisfactory/unsatisfactory ratings that the College requires in promotion and tenure cases introduces the question: How are the two schemes related? The answer is that they are distinct. Summary ratings on annual evaluations neither assure nor preclude tenure or promotion. Evaluation for promotion or tenure is a more thorough process than is the annual evaluation process, involving study of the candidate's work in all job-related areas by department and college committees in addition to the Chair and Dean. Recommendations at all levels must be based on the entire body of evidence of the candidate's performance, regardless of whether that is consistent with the candidate's ratings in annual evaluations. To consider the Chair's and Dean's annual performance evaluations as dictating a tenure and promotion decision would be inappropriate, although the annual evaluations can be expected to provide guidance toward tenure and promotion.

Overall Annual Performance Ratings. The overall performance ratings are described as follows in the evaluation form:

- **Performance is Exceptional** (denotes extraordinary performance that is well beyond that expected of faculty member relative to current faculty rank and position description)
- **Performance is Above Expectations** (denotes performance that is better than expected of a faculty member relative to current faculty rank and position description)
- **Performance Meets Expectations** (denotes performance expected of a faculty member relative to current faculty rank and position description; performance that can be defined as normative)
- **Performance is Below Expectations** (denotes performance that is less than expected of a faculty member relative to current faculty rank and position description; this rating means that improvement in level of performance is necessary)
- **Performance is Unacceptable** (denotes that performance level is not acceptable relative to that expected of a faculty member and/or performance is inconsistent with the conditions for continued employment with the Institution; this rating will trigger a full performance review)

An attempt to define the five ratings more clearly might be based on a statement of what the ratings are supposed to accomplish, but no such foundation is evident in the annual evaluation form. The two possible logical foundations are either that the ratings enforce a scale or quota, with certain proportions of faculty falling into each category, or that they reflect objective standards and so allow any distribution of ratings. The categories must be applied objectively for each faculty member, and no quotas or rankings are to be applied. *Meets expectations* is the baseline rating and should be assigned to faculty members who are doing very well at all aspects of their jobs. Thus the ratings are to be understood as follows:

- **Meets Expectations:** *Meets Expectations* is a very good rating. It says to the faculty member that she or he has performed well in their job and in so doing is eligible for a merit raise. The *Meets Expectations* rating is not to be interpreted as a veiled way of concluding that performance is sub-standard. In light of the selective way in which faculty hiring is done, performance expectations are necessarily high, and this rating is likely to be the most common rating.

- **Above Expectations:** A faculty member’s performance in a year might stand out as being well more than the expected high level of performance. When this occurs, the faculty member is performing above expectations.
- **Exceptional:** Almost by definition exceptional performance is rare. For this reason exceptional performance is hard to quantify in an a priori fashion. However, an observant chair will recognize exceptional performance because it involves tremendous accomplishment, far above and beyond one’s normal job assignment. Just as importantly, exceptional performance is universally recognized by one’s peers.
- **Below Expectations and Unacceptable Performance:** These two ratings are likely to be uncommon, given the selective way in which hiring occurs. Poor scholarship and lack of attention to our instructional mission could result in one of these ratings.

Comparison across departments, as might occur when merit pay raises are available, cannot be based directly on these ratings, for the ratings reflect objective judgments by the particular chair. To ensure fairness within the college, such comparison should be based on department-by-department percentiles. Suppose, for example, that Departments A, B, and C each have 10 faculty members. The following are possible distributions of ratings in those departments along with the corresponding percentiles:

Department A: Five meets expectations, three above expectations, and two exceptional. The percentile for meets expectations is .25 (25th percentile), that for above expectations is .65(65th percentile), and that for exceptional is .90(90th percentile).

Department B: Nine meets expectations and one above expectations. The percentile for meets expectations is .45(45th), and that for above expectations is .95(95th).

Department C: One meets expectations, one above expectations, and eight exceptional. The percentile for meets expectations is .05, that for above expectations is .15, and that for exceptional is .60.

Departments D & E: In these two departments either everyone is exceptional or everyone meets expectations. In both cases, the percentile rank is 0.5, i.e. 50th percentile.

Table: Department-by-Department Percentile Distributions for five departments each of size 10.

	Meets Expectations		Above Expectations		Exceptional	
	#	percentile	#	percentile	#	percentile
Dept A	5	25th	3	65th	2	90th
Dept B	9	45th	1	95th	0	
Dept C	1	5th	1	15th	8	60th
Dept D	0		0		10	50th
Dept E	10	50th	0		0	

Following the percentile method, a dean might award merit raises to the highly rated members of Departments A and B and to none in Department C. The effect is that generally high ratings in one department do not benefit that department relative to another. Thus a chair best promotes the welfare of his or her department by assigning ratings with restraint, and the Dean need not attempt to enforce a uniform distribution of ratings among different departments. Moreover restraint in assigning the “Above Expectations” and “Exceptional” ratings has the effect of making the “Meets Expectations” rating

more meritorious. Finally, it is understood that deans have the authority to distribute merit raises, that they balance several considerations when doing so, and that percentiles in very small departments would require special attention. The method is therefore intended only as a general guide to the dean.

Communication. The overall annual performance ratings are determined by the department chair. Chairs are vetted representatives of the College and University and are in the appropriate position to judge their faculty members' performance in the context of their training, experience, and faculty rank. Furthermore, chairs assign the annual workload that is being evaluated. Ultimately, the chair's recommendations are reviewed by the Dean of the College and the Provost.

It is incumbent upon each department chair to communicate clear evaluation guidelines to the faculty in each department. To help ensure consistent ratings across the College despite the range of departments, it is critical that each department chair meet with the Dean annually to discuss how the ratings will be determined. That will place the Dean in a better position to observe both the consistency and fairness of overall ratings. It is the responsibility of the Dean to communicate to the Provost and President the accuracy and fairness of overall ratings.

Measuring job performance. The metrics for measuring job performance must be in line with the University's mission. In particular, teaching students remains a fundamental mission and is the major expectation for non-tenure-track teaching faculty. Moreover, a high level of scholarship in the various forms it takes is also expected. Finally, both intra- and extramural service are an important part of our mission and are expected of all faculty. It is an overall expectation that faculty are engaged, collegial, and cooperative.

Non-Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty: Minimally, the overall annual performance rating for Non-Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty will be based in varying proportions on the following:

- Student advising/mentoring
- University, College, Departmental Service
- Contributions to recruiting and retention of students (includes any outreach activity)
- Number of student credit hours taught including the breadth of classes
- Effectiveness of instruction
- Other duties as expected by the Department

Non-Tenure-Track Research Faculty: Minimally, the overall annual performance rating for Non-Tenure-Track Research Faculty will be based in varying proportions on the following:

- University, College, Departmental Service
- Publication record interpreted in terms of the discipline
- Funding record inclusive of the effort to obtain funding
- National and international recognition
- Professional service
- Contributions to student research advising
- Other duties as expected by the Department

Tenure-Track Faculty: Minimally, the overall annual performance rating for Tenure-Track Faculty will be based in varying proportions on the following:

- Student advising/mentoring
- University, College, Departmental Service

- Contributions to recruiting and retention of students (includes any outreach activity)
- Level, intensity, and enrollment of courses taught
- Effectiveness of instruction
- Publication record interpreted in terms of the discipline
- Funding record inclusive of the effort to obtain funding
- National and international recognition
- Professional service
- Student research advising, as appropriate to department programs
- Other duties as expected by the Department