

STEPS AT APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION December, 2011

This policy document describes changes in campus practices of assigning steps at appointment and promotion. These changes will be implemented starting with cases that have an effective date of July 1, 2012.

Rationale for changing our practices

With some frequency, faculty members run out of the “headroom” they would need in order to receive a merit increase that would fully reward their records of achievement during a review period. This kind of problem may arise most frequently for faculty members who are expected to complete a major project, such as a book, before a “threshold” review. Inadequate headroom means that we are unable to offer timely rewards for meritorious records. In addition, inequities can arise between faculty members in different kinds of fields: while the progress of some is unimpeded, others may bump up against a limit.

Inadequate headroom has several interrelated causes. First, the step to which faculty members are assigned at their appointment may leave them with inadequate headroom at later stages of their careers.¹ For example, at Berkeley we have not used Step I in the Assistant Professor rank for many years, and we use Step II far less frequently than we once did. Appointments at even higher steps are increasingly common for Assistant Professors. These step assignments at appointment mean that promotions to Associate Professor can later place faculty members as high as Step IV, IV.5, or even V.²

We can see another cause for the problem in cases where faculty members who have received accelerated advancements run out of headroom relatively quickly, before they have had a chance to complete a major project expected for the next threshold advancement. When faculty members have been appointed at a fairly high step and then advance more quickly than normal, the difficulties can be compounded.

Finally, our way of coping with such difficulties can solve the problem at one review but cause it to reappear at a later review. Faculty members who have inadequate headroom for the advancement their record deserves will accumulate what is sometimes called an “excess of merit.” That is, their record presents merits in excess of those that can be recognized with advancement. This excess of merit must then be taken into account when the faculty member is able to cross the threshold. But this may then cause the headroom before a future threshold review to shrink to an inadequate size. For example, faculty members at Associate Professor, Step V.9, who have an excess of merit along with

¹ Some of our current practices of step assignment at appointment can perhaps be traced back to a time when the campus began to confront the gap between on-scale salaries and the salaries offered by peer competitors. The early response of the campus was to avoid decoupled salaries and instead offer appointments at somewhat higher steps.

² Someone appointed at a high step as an Assistant Professor may reach Step VI.9 before promotion. A normal promotion from VI.9 would be to Associate Professor Step IV, and an even larger advancement may be warranted by an exceptional record of research, teaching, and service. Promotion can thus take faculty members to Associate Professor, Step IV.5 or even Step V.

an exceptionally strong record since the last review may be promoted to a step in the Professor rank that leaves them almost no headroom before a Step-VI review.³

This policy statement concerns step assignments at appointment and at promotion to Associate Professor and to Professor. We have the ability to modify this set of campus practices in a way that will address headroom problems and yet be fair to our faculty. The key is to make thoughtful use of the mechanism of decoupling.

Step levels at appointment

By modifying our practices of assigning steps as indicated below, we can ensure that our incoming faculty will have appropriate headroom as they advance through the steps and ranks.⁴ It is important to underline that salary-setting at appointment will continue to conform to current campus guidelines. Only the mix of base salary and decoupling will change as a result of modifying our assignments of step-levels at appointment.

Appointment as Assistant Professor

- Step II will normally be used for candidates who are new PhDs.
- Steps III will be used for candidates with postdoctoral experience as researchers or instructors.
- Step IV will be used only if there is strong evidence that promotion within two years of appointment is likely.
- Steps V and VI will not be used for appointments.

Appointment as Associate Professor

- Associate Professors will normally be appointed at Step I or II.
- Associate Professor, Step III, will be used only if there is strong evidence that the candidate will be promoted to Professor within five years.
- For Associate Professors, Steps IV and V will not be used for appointments.

³ At promotion from Associate Professor, Step V.9, to Professor, a one-step increase would be to Professor, Step IV. For faculty members who have accumulated an excess of merit at V.9, presented an exceptionally strong record since the last review, or both, promotion will take them to Professor, Step IV.5, or even Step V.

⁴ Please note that exceptions to the guidelines below may be needed for appointments that are intercampus transfers.

Appointment as Professor

- Professors will not be appointed at Step V.
- Appointment of Professors at Step IV, VIII, and IX will be discouraged.

Step levels at promotion

In addition to providing additional headroom, we need to avoid simply moving a headroom problem from one threshold to the next. To ensure adequate headroom at future thresholds, we need to modify the way we assign steps at the time of promotion to Associate Professor and Professor. By using the mechanism of decoupling, we can address issues of salary that might otherwise arise.

Promotion to Associate Professor

- Assistant Professors at Step VI or below will be promoted to Associate Professor, Step I, II, or III.
- Assistant Professors at Step VI.5 may be promoted to Associate Professor, Step III.5.
- Assistant Professors at Step VI.9 may be promoted to Associate Professor, Step IV.

If advancement in accordance with these limitations does not adequately reward the records under review, decoupled increments will be provided to ensure appropriate reward. In determining the decoupled increment to be provided, an increment equal to the difference between the salary for Associate Professor, Step III, and Associate Professor, Step IV, will be treated as equivalent to one step.

When faculty members are promoted to Associate Professor, their salaries are adjusted in light of information about the “market” in their fields, in accordance with current campus guidelines. These adjustments will continue to be provided in addition to any decoupling that is needed to ensure appropriate reward for the record under review.

Promotion to Professor

- Associate Professors at Step V or lower will be promoted to Professor, Step I, II, or III.
- Associate Professors at Step V.5 may be promoted to Professor, Step III.5.
- Associate Professors at Step V.9 may be promoted to Professor, Step IV.

If advancement in accordance with these limitations does not adequately reward the records under review, decoupled increments will be provided to ensure appropriate

reward. In determining the decoupled increment to be provided, an increment equal to the difference between the salary for Professor, Step III, and Professor, Step IV, will be treated as equivalent to one step.