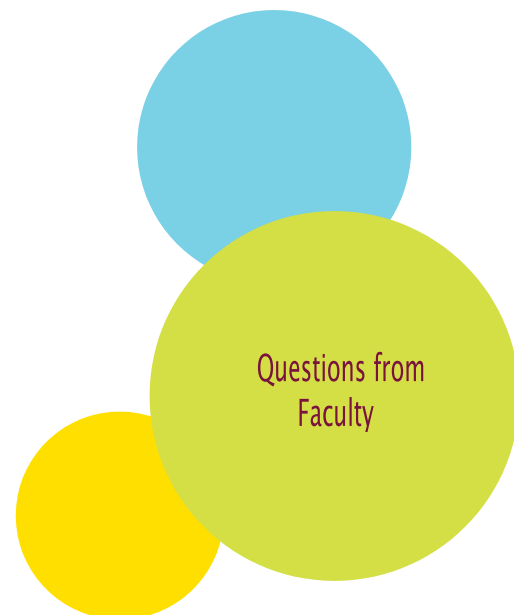


Frequently Asked Questions about Career Progress & Merit (CP/M)

Collected by MUFA

February 2020 (updated January 2023)

[\[Link to CP/M policy\]](#)



How is my CP/M calculated?

Each January, faculty members are supposed to submit a Record of Activities form and a CV to their department/area/school Chair/Director. The Chair, in consultation with a few other faculty members in the department, assesses the teaching, research, and service contributions from the previous calendar year. Each faculty member is assigned a final CP/M score, which is a weighted average of their teaching, research, & service scores (typically 40/40/20, but could be e.g. 80/20 for teaching-stream faculty, or some other weighting as outlined in each faculty member's letter of contract).

There are constraints on the CP/M scores that can be assigned. MUFA negotiates the number of par units that are available during each negotiation. It has **normally** been set at 1.2/faculty member for many years. Of those, typically 1.1/faculty member are allocated at the departmental level (the Chair can distribute only a number of par units equal to 1.1 times the number of faculty members in their department/area/school), 0.05/faculty member allocated at the Faculty level, and 0.05/faculty member are retained centrally to be allocated by the President, Provost, Dean of Graduate Studies & Dean of Health Sciences. In addition **as of January 2023**, CP/M scores can only be allocated in increments of **0.1**, within the range of 0 to 2.5.

The Chair brings their recommendations to the Dean, along with a rationale and any requests for any discretionary units that may be available at the Faculty level. After some negotiation, a 'probable' allocation is decided. The Deans bring their recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who ensures consistency across the university and also helps allocate the centrally-held units. When advised by the Dean, the Chairs communicate their 'probable merit allocation' to the faculty members, usually in late April/early May. The final decisions are communicated to each faculty member as part of the annual salary increase letter, which arrives in our departmental mailboxes around June 20th each year. The conversion of CP/M scores into dollars depends on your current salary: one CP/M point is worth more when your salary is low, and worth less as your salary increases. See the policy for the formula, and the MUFA website for a history of salary breakpoints and par values.

Question 1 continued..

Each Faculty and department has their own way of assessing the various contributions. Some aspects are quantitative; others are more qualitative. The following text is included on the Record of Activities form:

The data in the Record of Activities form is used to evaluate the contributions of a faculty member in each area of teaching, research and service, and to develop a weighted average of these. Merit evaluations should take into account all contributions listed. However, it is important to note that the chair or director, supported by any other colleagues who assist in making merit evaluations, will use their judgment in deciding how to value each contribution listed.

Deans and chairs / directors will in many cases augment this guidance to take into account local expectations and disciplinary norms. These might include, for example, an indication of the stage in the life of a publication at which it is used in the CP/M scoring (e.g. when accepted or when published); how a major publication such as a book or an edited volume is to be weighted and whether such a contribution is applied to the CP/M score over more than one year. In a similar manner departments may vary as to how they value work in progress, the development of long term partnerships, non-refereed publications, etc. While such local variation is reasonable and appropriate, it is important that faculty understand such expectations and practices in advance.

Q2

What should I include on my Record of Activities form?

The short answer is that you should include everything you have done that is even vaguely related to your university duties. The categories on the form will guide you, but if you have done something that isn't standard, or isn't easily categorized, find a place to include it. It can also be a good idea to let your Chair know the level of effort involved (e.g. amount of time spent, number of meetings, etc), particularly if the activity is not something that they would know a lot about. Your Record of Activities form is an opportunity to provide information that is already on your CV (publications, supervision, conferences etc) as well as the narrative about your activities during the year, things that do not easily show on a CV.

The Chair must base their evaluation on what you put in your Record of Activities form. They cannot rely on what they may have heard, or what they "should know" about your contributions. This means that if you leave a section blank (e.g. Service), you will necessarily receive zero for that contribution. The obvious extension is that if you don't submit the form at all, you forfeit your CP/M increase to your salary for the year.

A longer and more specific answer varies from department to department. Faculty members should talk to their Chair, and ask how they do the departmental evaluations. There should also be other faculty members who have been involved in the CP/M process (e.g. former Chairs, Associate Chairs, Executive Committee) who can also provide this departmental insight.

Q3

I had exactly the same level of contribution this year compared to last year (same teaching, same publications, etc). Why did my CP/M score go down?

Chairs are provided with a finite number of points to allocate to the faculty in their departments. In practice, this makes CP/M a relative system. If a faculty member in your department is uniquely successful in one or more of the categories such that a higher rating is warranted in a given year, the additional CP/M points that are allocated to that faculty member will result in fewer CP/M points being available to allocate to other faculty. This could result in one's CP/M score decreasing from one year to the next even if one's performance did not materially change. The opposite could also occur. One's CP/M score could increase from one year to the next even if one's performance did not materially change if the performance of other faculty members in the department in a given year is lower than in the previous year(s).

There is, unfortunately, some confusion around this since the CP/M policy also states Par connotes satisfactory performance and implies competent discharge of the duties normally associated with a faculty appointment at McMaster. A faculty member who performs these duties satisfactorily is of par merit; ... In any year a majority of faculty members receive at least a par increment which implies an absolute scale. Because CP/M is quantized in 0.25 increments, and Chairs typically are given about 1.1 to 1.15 units per faculty to assign, it can be very challenging to assign CP/M scores. For example, a "raw" score of 0.85 might get rounded down to 0.75, and not actually imply incompetent performance of your duties. This is why it is important to discuss your score with your Chair if you are surprised or confused about how it was determined.

MUFA has done some analysis of CP/M scores in recent years. Typically about 10% of faculty members get below par; and the rest are split almost evenly into three categories: par, 1.25 (i.e. slightly above par), and 1.5-2.5 (well above par)

Q4

Why is my final CP/M score not the same as my 'probable score' that my chair told me about in the spring?

Because your Dean and the central administration 'hold back' a certain number of CP/M points that they can allocate at their discretion. Chairs make recommendations to the Dean about how those should be allocated within their department; Deans can advocate with the Dean of Graduate Studies for allocation of the central pool.

Q5

What is the procedure to seek another opinion on my score?

CP/M scores are not grievable, but you can request that your score be reviewed (essentially, an appeal). If you are concerned about your score, the first step is to discuss your score with your Chair. If you are still not satisfied, you may ask the Provost to appoint a Review Committee to review your award. Such a request shall normally be lodged within six months of the effective date of the award. The Review Committee consists of the Provost who will serve as Chair, and two faculty members, normally from your Faculty.

Q5

I am jointly appointed between two departments (or two Faculties). How is my Record of Activities assessed, and how are the CP/M points for my position allocated?

The CP/M policy is silent on this question, which means that some procedure has been worked out between the Department Chairs and Deans (and also that it could change as those individuals move out of their positions). A faculty member in this situation, or with any other non-standard appointment at McMaster, should ask their Chair(s) for an explanation of the process, and possibly get a description in writing. If they are concerned about the appropriateness or fairness of the process, they should discuss these with the Chair(s)/Dean(s).