

# Manager & Supervisor Job Aid: Pay Progression

Pay decisions can have a deep and lasting impact on employee retention, team morale, and an organization's finances. As a manager or supervisor, a foundational understanding of pay progression informs conversations with your human resources contacts, who are your partners and consultants when making employee pay decisions.

## What Is Pay Progression?

Pay progression refers to the advancement of an employee's pay in their salary range while in their current role. As an employee's proficiency grows, their pay should also grow to recognize the increased value they bring to the job. Here is one way to assess an employee's level of proficiency as they grow within a job.

Emerging	Progressing	Established	Advanced
Employee is learning job responsibilities. They are not yet performing the full scope of job functions and require some direction.	Employee is performing most job responsibilities, and only require general supervision or occasional guidance.	Employee is competently performing all job responsibilities. They are productive and function independently.	Employee is expert in all job responsibilities. They consistently meet or exceed expectations, perform complex responsibilities, and serve as a mentor to newer colleagues. They may also be an expert in the field or bring specialized skills to the position.

## Questions to assess an employee's level of proficiency

Can the employee perform the full **scope of responsibilities**?

Some responsibilities	Most responsibilities	All responsibilities consistently at high proficiency	Exceptional expert in all aspects of job
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What is the employee's level of **knowledge and skills**?

Beginner knowledge and skills	Most knowledge and skills	All knowledge and skills as well as related areas	Great depth and breadth of knowledge and specialized skills
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What level of **supervision** does the employee need?

Close supervision	General supervision	Complete independence	Role model or mentor to others
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The position of an employee's **pay** should correlate with their **level of proficiency**. Someone who is learning and building proficiency should be paid on the lower end of their salary range. As they grow in the position, pay increases recognize and reward the employee for the increasing contribution they bring to the unit.



When you work together with your human resources contact and unit leaders to align employees' level of proficiency with their pay, be sure to take into account additional factors such as the unit's salary budget and salary relationship with other employees in similar jobs.

## Tools for Pay Progression

An employee's pay can progress along their salary range through a number of ways. When you feel that an employee should receive a pay increase, discuss the specific situation with your human resources contact to determine which of the pay progression tools below might be most appropriate.

### Performance



Performance increase is a common pay tool to recognize consistent and sustained performance that meets or exceeds expectations. It can be rewarded as base-building adjustment or lump sum payment.

Based on [university policy](#), employees must meet certain eligibility requirements in order to receive performance increases.

#### Example 1: Emerging Employee

Employee A is a new employee who recently passed probation. Although Employee A is still learning some aspects of the job, they have consistently exceeded expectations since they started. While building the necessary knowledge and skills, they demonstrated an eagerness to learn from colleagues, contributed new ideas, and have successfully completed all of their assignments. To recognize their progress and growing contribution to the team, you work with human resources to provide a **base-building performance increase**.

#### Example 2: Special Project

Employee B is a seasoned team member with extensive experience in all aspects of the job. They recently led an important project that brought together partners from multiple large departments. Employee B's effective leadership and project management skills contributed to

the successful completion of the project. you provide a **lump sum performance bonus** to reward Employee B for leading and completing this special project.

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## Parity



Sometimes, pay of multiple employees differ significantly even though they work in similar roles and have comparable experience and level of proficiency. Other times, an employee with significantly more experience and proficiency in a job is paid similarly to others in the job who have less experience and proficiency. Parity increase is a tool to address these imbalances in salary relationships.

Reach out to your human resources contact when you suspect that a parity issue exists because parity looks not only at an individual's pay situation, but compares pay situations of multiple employees, sometimes across units. Human resources professionals can review employee salary data to assess parity concerns.

### Example 1: Differentiation between Team Members

Employee A, an experienced team member, has the same pay as a new hire that they are training and mentoring. Employee A and the new hire have the same job title. After working with human resources to identify this parity issue, you provide Employee A with a **parity increase** to recognize Employee A's higher level of proficiency and experience.

### Example 2: Comparison across Campus

Employee B is well-established in their role. They consistently demonstrate proficiency in all the knowledge and skills needed for the job. Employee B is the only person in this role in your unit. After working with a human resources professional to conduct a parity review, you discover that Employee B is paid lower than other employees in the same job across campus. You provide a **parity increase** to Employee B to ensure that their pay is comparable to their peers on campus.

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## Equity



Pay equity focuses on ensuring pay parity among employees without regard to race, color, gender, religion, sex, national origin, and disability. Equity increases are used to correct pay equity issues identified as a result of review and analysis by compensation professionals.

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## Market



A market increase is a tool that can advance an employee's pay to ensure their pay is competitive with the market. Market increases can also be used to retain exemplary employees with highly-valued expertise when there is a risk of them leaving the University of Wisconsin.

### Example 1: Competitive Pay

Several members on a team have left the unit for similar jobs in the private sector. During the exit interviews of the departing team members, you learn that those staff left primarily for higher pay. You provide a **market increase** to the remaining team members who are proficient, solid performers to make their pay more competitive with the market.

### Example 2: Retaining Top Talent

An employee with highly specialized skills needed by the unit has shared that they are exploring opportunities outside of the university. You provide a **market increase** to make their pay more competitive compared to potential outside employers while you explore additional ways to retain them by looking at their total rewards package.

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## Change in Unique Responsibilities



An employee's unique responsibilities may change as they grow in a position and as a unit's needs evolve. When the new responsibilities are greater in scope, impact, and complexity than the previous responsibilities, an employee can receive a Change in Unique Responsibility increase to recognize the higher level of contribution.

- If the change in unique responsibilities is temporary, employees can receive higher pay while they are performing those duties.
- If the new responsibilities are permanent, the pay increase is also permanent.

### Example 1: Unit Reorganization

After a unit reorganization, Employee A takes on a new responsibility that is not part of their position description. Although Employee A has not performed this responsibility previously, they have the knowledge and skills to take on this more complex work. Other than the new responsibility, Employee A is still performing the core responsibilities of their current job. After you update their position description, you provide a **change in unique responsibility increase** to recognize the additional higher level work Employee A is taking on.

### Example 2: Temporary Responsibility

Employee B temporarily takes on the responsibility of a colleague while the colleague is out on parental leave. The added responsibility is outside of Employee B's typical scope of work. You provide a **temporary change in unique responsibility increase** while they perform that work.

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## Pay Plan



A pay plan increase is authorized by the Wisconsin State Legislature's Joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER). All academic staff, faculty, limited appointee, and university staff are eligible for this increase.

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