

Fiscal Year 2026

Compensation & Salary Request Guidelines

The Fiscal Year 2026 Compensation and Salary Request Guidelines have been updated to incorporate changes informed by the University System of Georgia (USG) and UGA. The FY25 guidance that required approval by the University President will continue. Limited market-based adjustments are permissible for FY26 in circumstances where the unit can demonstrate notable recruitment, retention, and/or equity concerns, and the market data available supports the request. These requests should be rare and will only be approved by the President under extraordinary circumstances as outlined in the criteria below.

Please note that only a handful of such requests for the entire University will be approved by the President during FY26. Any requests subject to the [Advanced Salary Increase \(ASI\)](#) request process and review by USG) remain in place.

Please note that these individual salary adjustments may render an employee ineligible for participation in subsequent University compensation programs. These decisions are dependent upon the rules issued by USG and/or UGA at the time of the compensation program and as a part of the respective process.

Criteria for Requests Requiring President's Approval

Allowable Salary Requests:

- Retention Adjustments
- Acute Compression Adjustments
- Limited Market-Based Adjustments

Requirements:

Must include a justification with confirmation of the following criteria:

1. The employee received an FY26 merit-based adjustment. An individual who did not receive a merit-based adjustment may only be considered if extraordinary circumstances led to them not being selected.
2. The employee is critical to organizational success based on having rare skills or specialized knowledge that directly connects to areas of student success or critical functions related to mission critical University-level projects or needs.
3. The employee maintains the highest level of productivity, performance, and outstanding service to the university.

4. Loss of the employee would result in a significant loss of external revenue or measurable and significant impact with respect to student instruction, student services, research, and/or public service and outreach.

Retention Adjustments:

1. Must provide an external offer or equivalent external confirmation that supports the request.

Acute Compression Adjustments:

1. Significant compression may be addressed so long as the compression is not brought on by a previous salary action and doesn't create cascading compression.

Market-Based Adjustments:

1. USG expects institutions to limit market-based adjustments during the review and implementation of their Classification and Compensation project. To meet this expectation, UGA is implementing high-level guidance to assist units in navigating market-based adjustment requests, including the approval process.
2. Limited allowance for market-based adjustments will be considered only in extraordinary circumstances and where:
 - a. The unit is able to demonstrate notable recruitment, active turnover, and/or equity concerns.
 - b. The request is supported by market or survey data that meets regulatory and industry standards (e.g., CUPA).
 - c. Requested market adjustments applies to all individuals within a classification (i.e., not a single incumbent). UHR may seek input from the subject matter experts/functional heads of relevant central units.
3. The unit may not request market, equity, or compression adjustments resulting from previous salary decisions/actions.
4. Requests must be supported by the Provost or respective unit's Vice President and be directly connected to areas of student success or critical functions related to mission critical University-level projects or needs.
5. Market and pay grades are assessed annually. Annual market adjustments outside of this assessment process are not expected.
6. Individuals not meeting the performance expectations noted below will not be included in any approved market-based adjustments.

Impermissible Salary Requests:

1. Employees who received a retention, market, or equity adjustment in the past year.

2. “Pre-emptive” retention requests.
3. Compression adjustments resulting from hiring a new employee at an elevated rate of pay relative to existing employees.
4. Salary requests for individuals on a Performance Remediation Plan (PRP) or undergoing any kind of progressive discipline or Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
5. Lateral changes in a unit or across the university to another staff position with a similar market, level, and workload do not meet the threshold for an increase in salary. Lateral changes will not typically result in a salary increase.
6. Additionally, a move to a higher pay grade would be seen as a promotion and may result in an increase, whereas a move to a lower pay grade would be seen as a demotion and may result in a pay reduction.
7. Requests that result in a rate above the pay grade maximum.
8. Requests based on merit or performance.
9. Retroactive requests are not permissible and may only be acceptable when an administrative error occurs. University Human Resources (UHR) and the Office of Academic Fiscal Affairs (AFA) will review all requests to determine the appropriateness of any retroactive salary adjustments.
Retroactive requests are not accepted by USG.

Unit Responsibilities

Dean/Vice President Responsibilities:

1. Setting expectations within your organization regarding what can and cannot be submitted.
2. All proposals must be approved by the Dean/VP prior to submission to UHR/AFA and the justification must meet the rare and extraordinary circumstances outlined above prior to submission to UHR/AFA.
3. Approval of final recommended salary prior to UHR/AFA and presidential review and approval.
4. Units are responsible for conducting strategic reviews to determine whether a request meets the criteria for rare and extraordinary circumstances. If a request does not meet these criteria, the request should not be submitted.
5. If an employee has received other retention, market, equity, and/or compression adjustments in the past year due to changes in their job duties, units should consider the appropriateness of the request. Submitting multiple requests for the same employee or group of employees within a short period of time (e.g., during the same year) should be rare.
6. Units should complete the Request for Salary Action (RSA). The RSA justification must provide evidence of how the request meets the rare and extraordinary requirements.
7. Units should ensure that work is not started until all required approvals are obtained. This applies to all salary requests (e.g., supplemental duties, new positions).

8. Salary action details should only be communicated to the employee after all required approvals are obtained.
9. Ensure salary decisions are well-informed and made with intention. Approving a salary request for one employee will not be considered a valid justification for subsequently increasing the salaries of other employees.

What should be included in the request?

1. A completed [Request for Salary Action \(RSA\) form](#)
2. All applicable supporting documentation (i.e.: performance reviews, productivity reports, budgetary impact reports, evidence of outstanding service, unit salary comparisons, etc.)
3. Retention requests only – evidence of the external offer must be submitted to UHR/AFA. Requests should be submitted within 7 days of the external offer.
4. All request proposals must be approved by the Dean/VP prior to submission to UHR/AFA.
5. Funding must be available at the time of the request. Should funding be required, the unit should work with their leadership prior to submission to confirm funding is available and committed to support the request.

Review Process

Overview:

1. Faculty requests will be submitted to AFA for initial reviews.
2. Staff requests will be submitted to UHR Compensation for initial reviews via [TeamDynamix](#). UHR will review the documentation and confirm the exception request.
 - a. Requests will be reviewed monthly with the President and Provost.
3. Requests requiring USG approval will be routed after obtaining Presidential approval.
4. Units will be contacted after the decision meeting to inform them of the approval status and effective date of the action if proposed effective date is in the past by the time approvals are received.
5. Requests that do not require USG approval will be entered by UHR into OneUSG Connect once approved by the President. The signed RSAs will be returned to the unit.

Timeline:

1. Please allow up to 30 days for the full process (excluding USG approvals).
 - a. An additional 30+ days should be allowed for any requests requiring USG approval.
2. Requests should be received by the 15th of the month prior to the proposed effective date.

- a. Example: A request received on June 15th, with a 30-day approval and no USG approval required, would be entered for the next effective pay date in July.
 - i. Note: This assumes final approval is received prior to the [HR/Payroll deadline](#).
3. Retention requests may be submitted with a timeline that is shorter than the standard if the documented external offer requires a shorter response time.

Other Related Salary Guidance

Unit Restructures/Reorganizations:

1. Reorganizations will be reviewed in full for appropriateness by UHR.
2. Please allow at least 30 days for the full review process (excluding USG approvals). All UGAJobs actions must be submitted prior to the start of the review. As noted above, retroactive requests should not be submitted. In the event the review extends beyond the proposed effective date, the effective date will be amended.
3. All aspects of a reorganization will be approved at the same time regardless of whether compensation is associated with the action.
4. Newly created staff positions must be submitted for review through this process. Administrators should review the duties and assignments of existing employees before creating new positions to determine if a realignment or replacement of responsibilities is more appropriate. New staff positions will not be approved without documented analysis.

Central Functional Units:

1. The updated classification system distinguishes between unit-level practitioners and those in a central functional unit. In most cases, the central unit serves as the authoritative source for the University which may warrant a higher-graded classification.
2. Units that request a higher classification or compensation level may be subject to central level approval. UHR will facilitate this process and seek input from the central subject matter experts/functional heads. The unit will be informed of the rationale for requests that are denied.

Supplemental Pay Guidelines:

1. Please refer to the [Supplemental Pay Guidelines](#) for specific guidance.