

## **Higher Education Special Pay Guidelines**

---

### **Purpose**

The purpose of special pay is to enable higher education institutions to remain locally competitive by compensating employees at an amount higher than the system-wide rates. Special pay is not intended to maintain a similarity between non-represented and represented employees. Rather, in accordance with [RCW 41.06.157](#), non-represented employees in higher education institutions are included in the general state compensation plan and their salaries are set along with non-represented general government employees. While special pay may be requested for non-represented employees, each request has its own unique circumstances and the review and recommendation will be situation dependent.

### **Statutory Authority**

The Office of Financial Management (OFM), State Human Resources (State HR) Director establishes salary schedules or plans for institutions of higher education and related boards that are competitive for positions of a similar nature in the state or locality of the institution.

[RCW 41.06.133\(1\) \(j\)](#) requires salary ranges at institutions of higher education and related boards to be competitive for positions of a similar nature in the state or the locality in which an institution of higher education or related board is located. Such adoption and revision is subject to approval in accordance with [RCW 43.88](#).

### **Categories of Special Pay/Supporting Documentation Required**

All special pay requests must include the following information:

1. Titles and class codes;
2. Number of affected incumbents in each class;
3. Salary survey data for similar classes in other jurisdictions;
4. Justification supporting the request.

The basis of the request must fit one or more of the four categories below. The request must include the data listed under each category. The requesting institution provides the data and rationale for State HR staff to evaluate the request. Each institution has a designated team of [State HR classification and compensation analysts](#) who can assist when preparing the special pay request.

### **Unique Skills/Duties:**

Special pay may be appropriate when a unique job requires skills, duties or working conditions beyond those typically required of otherwise comparable positions in the locality and when institutions experience difficulty recruiting candidates with these unique knowledge and skills, resulting in lengthened recruitment and training periods.

Special pay may also be appropriate for certain pro-rata positions. Pro-rata positions involve a significant portion of an employee's time on work in two separate classes, provided:

- The classes are unrelated and at different salary ranges. Unrelated in this context means the classes are not in the same series and require different work, knowledge, and skills; and
- More than twenty percent and less than fifty percent of the employee's time is spent performing duties in the higher-paid class; and
- The work configuration is required on a continuing basis.

### **Provide the following information to State HR:**

- Description of unique job requirements, working conditions or other circumstances which warrant special pay;
- Description of how this data compares to other positions at the institution or similar positions in other jurisdictions;
- For requests based on pro-rata work:
  - Position number;
  - Percentage of time worked in each of the classes;
  - A current position description.

Note: Pro-rata positions shall remain allocated to the lower-paid class on a full-time basis but compensated on a pro-rata basis.

## **Recruitment and/or Retention:**

Special pay can usually improve severe recruitment and/or retention problems. The institution's statistics need to show that good faith recruitment and/or retention efforts have not been successful.

### **Provide the following information to State HR for requests based on Recruitment problems:**

- Number of current funded vacancies you are actively trying to fill;
- Length of vacancies for the job class (average or individual);
- If recruiting is not taking place, explain why not;
- Where, when and how long advertising has been used;
- Number and length of recruiting periods;
- Number of applicants and numbers who pass each phase of the selection process;
- Number interviewed; if not all applicants are passing the preliminary selection process, explain why;
- Number of employment and salary offers extended. If no offers are extended, explain why not;
- Number of offers declined and reasons why;
- Description of how this recruitment data compares to other positions at the institution or similar positions in other jurisdictions.

### **Provide the following information to State HR for requests based on Retention problems:**

- Internal turnover (movement within institution) and external turnover (leaving the institution) statistics for the last twelve months, both numbers and percentages;
- Information on new salary, positions and employers of those leaving the institution;
- Difficulties or workload problems due to high turnover (such as backlog, use of excessive overtime, use of temporary employees, loss of federal funding, excessive training costs, adverse impacts on services);
- Description of how this retention data compares to other positions at the institution or similar positions in other jurisdictions.

### **Effective Operations (Emergent Conditions):**

Special pay may be appropriate to prevent recruitment/retention problems that would severely impair the effective operation of the institution. Employee turnover would result in productivity loss that could result in risk to public health, safety, general welfare, or essential functions of the institution.

[RCW 41.06.152\(2\)](#) states this section does not apply to the higher education hospital special pay plan or to any adjustments to the classification plan under [RCW 41.06.157](#) that are due to emergent conditions. Emergent conditions are defined as emergency conditions requiring the establishment of positions necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare.

### **Provide the following information to State HR:**

- Description of how the class has a major impact on the teaching, research or public service missions of the institution;
- Description of how the class compares to other positions at the institution or similar positions in other jurisdictions;
- Rationale as to how failure to grant special pay could result in retention problems, which would seriously jeopardize the effective operation of the institution;
- Current salary data, such as salary survey data for similar classes in other jurisdictions within the same area.

### **Salary Compression and/or Inversion:**

Special pay may be used to maintain an appropriate salary differential where related classes have been granted special pay. Typically, the related classes will be in the same class series; however, the requester may present rationale as to why other related classes should be included.

### **Provide the following information to State HR:**

- The sequence of events that led to the salary compression and/or inversion;
- The reporting relationships of the classes--include organizational chart;
- When a request includes classes from more than one classification series, provide rationale as to why they should be included.

## **Process for Requesting and Processing Special Pay**

1. Institutions must submit requests for special pay in writing to the Office of Financial Management (OFM), State HR Director. Requests should be submitted to State HR at [classandcomp@ofm.wa.gov](mailto:classandcomp@ofm.wa.gov) or mailed to P.O. Box 47500, Olympia, WA 98504 addressed to the State HR Director.
2. State HR staff will evaluate each request individually and make a recommendation to the State HR Director, who will consider requests on a case-by-case basis.
3. If the request is supported, it will be placed on the Director's Meeting Agenda for the upcoming meeting, for final consideration and adoption by the State HR Director.

## **Salary Survey Data for Analyzing Requests**

- Requests initiated within 12 months of data collection of the last State Salary Survey may use that survey data.
- The purchase of or custom conducted survey data must be completed within 12 months of the institution's requests to State HR. Survey data must be made available to State HR for review and analysis of the request.

## **Application and Duration of Special Pay**

- Once the State HR Director approves the request, special pay applies to classifications on an institution-wide basis, unless otherwise noted.
- Special pay applies to incumbents' salaries on a step-for-step basis; e.g., an incumbent on Step L of the system-wide salary range will move to Step L of the special pay range.
- The effective date of the special pay is the day following the Director's meeting unless otherwise noted.
- Special pay ranges/rates remain in effect until the system pay range for the class equals or exceeds the special pay range, except when the State HR Director determines otherwise. For example:
  - A sunset review is conducted and the conditions for the special pay no longer exist.
- Pro-rata pays remains in effect as long as the work configuration remains unchanged and will be adjusted if the work configuration changes.
- The Institution will remove pro-rata pay if the work configuration no longer supports its use.