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Pay Review Framework

Guidance for Managers

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Overview

Imperial's annual Equity and Achievement Pay Review processes allow managers to:

- Ensure salaries remain fair, consistent, and aligned with comparable roles
- Address internal pay disparities, including gender and ethnicity differentials
- Reward individuals and teams who have demonstrated exceptional contribution

These processes apply to all staff on Imperial terms and conditions, except those with a live Employee Relations sanction or those who have not completed their Imperial Essentials training.

Both processes will commence in May, and awards will be implemented in the January payroll with consolidated increased to pay backdated to 1 October.

Managers should work closely with their [Head of People](#) throughout the process to ensure that all recommendations are appropriately justified, consistent with institutional expectations, and supported by clear evidence.

IMPORTANT CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENT

Please note: recommendations as part of this process must not be discussed with employees until these are formally agreed. This requirement is essential to avoid any misunderstanding or premature expectations. Managers should respond neutrally if asked about recommendations, explaining that the review process is ongoing and that outcomes will be communicated once final decisions have been made.

An FAQ document on the Pay Review processes is available on the [Pay Review webpages](#).

Department pay review recommendations will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, prior to review by Local Decision-Making Boards (at Faculty/ Business School/Support Service area level), to ensure recommendations meet the criteria and that sufficient evidence to support recommendations has been provided. This is in line with Imperial's commitment to reducing its gender, and ethnicity and disability pay gaps while ensuring equity and a consistent application of achievement pay review awards.

Performance and Contribution

Decisions related to pay should be informed by a rounded understanding of each employee's contribution over the preceding year.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Annual Review Conversation (ARC)
- ARC Ratings Tools where staff have chosen to use them
- Evidence from regular one to one discussions
- Progress against agreed objectives
- Colleagues' overall alignment with the expectations of their role
- Colleagues' overall behaviour aligns with Imperial values
- Observed contribution to the Team, department, and University

The ARC tools provide shared language for discussing performance and, while not a direct measure for pay decisions, help managers determine whether an employee's performance:

Needs Development

Performance is not meeting expectations; issues should already be under discussion.

Not eligible for Achievement Awards; Equity may apply only in exceptional structural-pay cases.

Is Developing Appropriately

Appropriate progress for someone newer to role, newly promoted, or building capability.

Typically ineligible for Achievement Awards; may be considered for Equity where there is clear pay disparity.

Is On Track

Consistently meeting expectations for role and grade. This is the expected level once fully established.

Not eligible for Achievement Awards; may be eligible for Equity if benchmarking shows misalignment.

Is Exceptional

Clear and sustained evidence of contribution above and beyond the remit of the role. May include leadership, impact on wider teams, or contribution significantly beyond typical expectations.

Eligible for Achievement Awards (consolidated or one off depending on nature and duration).

Achievement Pay Review

The Achievement Pay Review recognises individuals and teams who have made exceptional contributions that go beyond the normal expectations of their role and that demonstrate a clear, positive impact on their area or the wider institution. Unlike the Equity Review, which is focused on fairness in internal salary alignment, the Achievement Review specifically rewards contribution and excellence.

Types of Achievement Award

Achievement Awards may take two forms: consolidated increases and one-off payments.

A consolidated increase is awarded where exceptional contribution has been sustained over time, reflecting consistently high performance across the review period.

A one-off payment is appropriate where the contribution is time-limited, linked to a specific project, event, or defined period of exceptional work. All team awards are made as one-off payments.

When determining the most appropriate type of award, managers should consider the duration, nature, and impact of the achievement, alongside the individual's salary position within the grade. For individuals near the top of their grade, a one-off payment may be more appropriate.

One-Off Achievement Awards

A one-off award recognises significant, time-limited contributions that exceed the expectations of the role but are not sustained across the full review period.

A one off award should be recommended when:

- The achievement relates to a single project, event or distinct period of exceptional work.
- The contribution represents short term leadership, innovation or problem solving that exceeds the expectations of the role.
- The impact is clear and meaningful, but does not represent an ongoing change in responsibilities
- The individual is already positioned at the upper end of the grade, making consolidation inappropriate.
- The contribution occurred during exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, rather than as part of a long-term pattern.
- The recommendation relates to a team award, as team awards are always one-off payments.

Consolidated Achievement Awards

A consolidated award recognises sustained exceptional performance that is consistently demonstrated over a significant portion of the review period and is clearly beyond the expectations of the role.

A consolidated award should be recommended when:

- The exceptional performance has been sustained, consistent and clearly evidenced over the course of the review period.
- The contribution has resulted in lasting or strategic improvements to services, processes, teaching, research or operations.
- The individual has demonstrated increased autonomy, leadership, or responsibility beyond their grade expectations

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- The level of performance aligns with ARC indicators of sustained exceptional performance.
- The impact is broad, long term and materially beneficial to the department, faculty or institution.

Criteria for achievement pay review awards

1. To recognise substantial and sustained exceptional ongoing individual achievement beyond the usual expectations of the role
2. To recognise substantial and exceptional one-off individual achievement beyond the usual expectations of the role

Imperial Values

Assessments of exceptional contribution and achievement must be made in line with Imperial Values.

More details on Imperial Values are available on the [website](#).

Exceptional contribution and achievement

Exceptional contribution and achievement should be in addition to the usual expectations and contributions of the role as outlined in the job description. For further guidance on what constitutes an exceptional contribution, please refer to the *Pay Review Framework*.

Managers will be expected to submit a supporting statement as part of the recommendation process, with specific and detailed evidence of how the employee has demonstrated exceptional contribution and achievement, in line with Imperial values and remit for the grade.

Please ensure your statement is easy to understand without needing prior or additional knowledge of your area. For guidance on what constitutes as exceptional contribution, please refer to the *Writing a Supporting Statement* document.

Internal benchmarking data

Achievement Pay Review award recommendations should be based on an employee's contribution and achievement, but considerations on the employee's current internal benchmarking position is also important.

Pay benchmarking is a comparison between the employee's salary and the midpoint (median) and/or upper quartile of their grade. This enables a manager to aid pay progression by awarding higher pay increases to those who are on a lower salary, and restricting the increases awarded to those who are on higher salaries or near the top of pay scales.

However, it is also important to recognise when it may be appropriate for an employee to be positioned at the start of the grade – for example, if they have been recently promoted to a new grade. Managers should review the internal salaries and benchmarking data for their area to assess where employees are against the internal market.

The Power BI Dashboards (Pay Review tables tab and Pay Review tables for Extract tab) should be used when determining this. For example:



If a staff member in the above example earns a basic salary of £68,000, their salary is above the median and very close to the maximum for other employees on the same grade. Consideration must be made on whether there is sufficient justification demonstrated through the employee's exceptional achievement to apply a consolidated pay review award (a permanent increase in the employee's base salary).

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Within the Power BI dashboards, salaries can be sorted highest to lowest, and the highest salaries will be coloured dark blue. Salaries closest to the average are coloured pink/ purple and the lowest salaries are coloured orange. The colour coding changes depending on the filters applied (i.e., staff group, grade, position, gender, ethnic group).

- Where benchmarking suggests an employee is paid at or above the upper quartile, careful consideration should be given before recommending a consolidated increase to salary. In some cases, a one-off (non-consolidated) payment may be more appropriate.
- If employees are meeting expectations of the role, pay is within the market median or upper quartile or higher, and no pay gaps exist with their peers, it is appropriate to keep pay where it is (i.e., employee should not be considered for a pay award).

ARCs and regular feedback

Managers are encouraged to use the Annual Review Conversation (ARC) process to support informed decisions on contribution pay, with staff achievements clearly evidenced in support of managers' achievement pay review submissions.

Outcomes of ARCs are one element used to inform decisions on pay review award recommendations. Outside of the ARC process, other conversations and feedback including regular one-to-ones with employees should be considered as part of the overall review of an employee's achievement.

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Equity Pay Review

The purpose of the Equity Pay Review is to ensure that staff performing roles of similar size, scope, and responsibility are positioned fairly relative to one another. Equity awards address structural pay differences that arise where, despite equivalent roles, some staff have become misaligned due to legacy decisions, historical pay patterns, or other non-role-related factors. It is important to note that Equity Awards apply only to staff on fixed salaries. Staff who progress through incremental spine points will naturally move through their grade each year and therefore should not be included within the Equity Review. The Equity Pay Review is the process used to ensure our pay is consistent, fair, and balanced across roles so that staff receive equal pay for work of equal value. Equal pay is different from the gender pay gap, which measures the difference between the average earnings of male and female employees, irrespective of job role or seniority. By law, employers must also not pay an employee less because of their disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or another protected characteristic.

When reviewing equity considerations, managers should be mindful that Imperial's pay gap and benchmarking data show that misalignment disproportionately affects some groups more than others, particularly women and colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds. While Equity Awards can be made for any individual where clear evidence of misalignment exists, managers are encouraged to pay particular attention to patterns of structural disadvantage highlighted in the dashboards. All Equity recommendations must be grounded in evidence drawn from like-for-like role comparison and internal benchmarking, rather than personal characteristics alone.

When considering an Equity recommendation, managers must compare employees only with colleagues whose roles are genuinely comparable. This means selecting individuals who share the same grade and whose responsibilities, job family, decision-making expectations, and scope of role closely align. Comparisons should not be drawn across the whole team or between roles with differing levels of autonomy, complexity, or functional purpose.

Example: gender analysis

The table below shows an example (using dummy data) of a table in the Gender analysis resource of Power BI. This table has been sorted to show the median percentage differential by gender greatest to smallest. In this example, we can see that the largest gaps for median salaries by gender occur at levels 4 and 6.

Simple grade	Female Count	Male Count	Female Mean Basic Salary	Male Mean Basic Salary	Gender Mean Diff	Gender % Mean Diff	Female Median Basic Salary	Male Median Basic Salary	Gender Median Diff	Gender % Median Diff
Level 6	68	60	£87,112	£93,696	£6,584	7.0%	£83,173	£88,241	£5,068	5.7%
Level 4	441	380	£56,017	£56,970	£953	1.7%	£55,001	£58,005	£3,004	5.2%
Level 3b	608	423	£44,572	£45,189	£617	1.4%	£44,624	£45,796	£1,172	2.6%
Level 3a	556	267	£36,988	£37,173	£185	0.5%	£37,380	£38,360	£980	2.6%
Level 2b	228	102	£32,101	£32,368	£266	0.8%	£32,404	£33,180	£776	2.3%
Level 1b	32	40	£25,304	£25,694	£389	1.5%	£25,061	£25,588	£527	2.1%
Level 1a	72	107	£22,574	£22,666	£92	0.4%	£22,610	£22,909	£299	1.3%
Lecturer	59	121	£64,115	£64,559	£444	0.7%	£63,392	£63,392	£0	0.0%
Level 5	142	160	£66,570	£68,060	£1,490	2.2%	£68,210	£68,210	£0	0.0%
Senior Teaching Fellow	72	58	£59,120	£59,401	£281	0.5%	£58,252	£58,252	£0	0.0%
Total	2278	1718	£46,330	£49,599	£3,269	6.6%	£43,516	£48,226	£4,710	9.8%

Internal benchmarking

Pay benchmarking is a comparison between the employee's salary and the midpoint (median) and mean (average) of their grade. When reviewed from an equity perspective, managers should consider if the differential in pay is fair, equitable and justified. Within the Power BI dashboards, managers have access to a number of resources to determine current pay equity issues within their department or team.

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- **Mean, Med, Min, Max:** this sets out the minimum, median, mean (average) and maximum salaries for each grade (by team/department).
- **Gender analysis:** this sets out pay analysis by grade by team/department. You are able to see the number of male and female employees in each grade along with median and mean salaries, and the % differentials that exist by gender. The largest gaps are highlighted red (i.e., those furthest from zero) and the smallest gaps are highlighted in green. Gaps in favour of women will be presented as a minus (negative) figure, while gaps in favour of men will show as a positive figure.
- **Ethnic group analysis:** this sets out pay analysis by grade by team/department. You are able to see the number of Black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME) and white employees in each grade along with median and mean salaries and the percentage differentials that exist by ethnicity. The largest gaps are highlighted red (i.e., those furthest from zero) and the smallest gaps are highlighted in green. Gaps in favour of BAME employees will be presented as a minus (negative) figure, while gaps in favour of white employees will show as a positive figure.

Together these resources enable managers to see where current pay equity issues exist and will help to determine where pay awards should be focused to alleviate them. These resources will also assist with determining an average level of increase or payment to make that will help to reduce equity differentials.

All of the tables mentioned above are interactive and can be filtered down according to grade, gender, and ethnicity. The columns within each of the tables can be sorted to allow you to see percentage differentials grouped into red and green, and greatest to smallest.

Differences in pay for similar roles

Everyone brings unique skills and abilities to a job and not all job roles will be exactly the same, even if they share the same job title.

Jobs with similar duties can be paid differently and jobs involving more complex tasks or greater responsibility may attract higher salaries. There may be various circumstances which have led to variations in pay, such as the employee's previous salary, their previous experience, and previous contribution and achievement awards whilst at the University (and within the same grade).

When reviewing the internal pay benchmark information provided, managers are asked to proactively question if the difference in pay is a result of the above. If this is not the case, they should consider discussing with their People Partner if a pay review should be submitted against one of the two criteria below.

Criteria for equity pay review awards

1. To address a significant misalignment of a salary when compared to others within the organisation who have a similar role size and profile
2. To address equal pay differentials

Managers will be expected to submit a supporting statement as part of the recommendation process and Equity justifications must be detailed. A strong justification will clearly identify the colleagues whose roles are comparable and explain why these roles have been selected as comparators. It will describe the nature of the misalignment and summarise the evidence drawn from the dashboards. The statement should explain why the difference in positioning cannot be justified by role-related factors and how the recommended award would support fair alignment. Reviewers should be able to understand the rationale without prior knowledge of the team or its structure.

Responsibility of managers

As a manager, you are actively encouraged to review and consider the contribution of all your team members across the previous 12 months. The criteria, as set out in the Pay Review Framework, can be used to identify individuals who have demonstrated exceptional and sustained contribution outside the requirements of the role over a continuous period.

Line managers need to make evidence-based and fair judgments on employees' achievement. All managers are expected to apply equal treatment and fairness when making pay decisions. Decisions must be free from bias in relation to age, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy or bias on any other grounds. Part-time staff, staff on family-friendly leave, and staff on fixed-term contracts should be treated fairly and given equal consideration. Please note that colleagues who have not completed their Imperial Essentials training should not be put forward for an award.

Where managers are not as familiar with the contribution or achievement of individuals or groups of staff themselves, they should proactively seek feedback from other managers and supervisors to ensure everyone in their area has been fairly considered. *(For any staff who also hold the role of Global Institute Co-Director, the Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise) will provide input to the Department to provide extra context for the individual's annual review. Any recommendations should be discussed with the VPRE).*

For team achievement awards where individuals being recommended for one-off payments may have different line managers, it is important that managers discuss and agree on recommendations and how the awards will be funded (which budget/cost centre this will be paid from). For example, if awards are being recommended for a whole project team, there needs to be consideration for which individuals have performed exceptionally above the normal achievements of their role.

Pay awards should not be discussed with employees until these are formally agreed.

Funding for Equity and Achievement Pay Awards

When considering awards for members of your team/department, please note that this will be charged back to the applicable budget/cost centre for your team/department. It is imperative to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover these awards.

For staff members funded by Research Grants - under the terms and conditions of the UK Research and Innovation body (UKRI), salary increase and one-off payments as part of the Pay Review process are not eligible to be charged to research council awards and other externally funded research projects/grants. These increases/payments are also an ineligible cost for Imperial's other core funders including:

- European Commission
- CRUK
- Royal Society
- Wellcome Trust

Therefore, departments must make certain that the relevant budgets/cost centres can feasibly cover these payments for externally funded Research staff, as they are unable to be charged back to the external grant/funds.

If you are unsure on the eligibility of a particular payment/award as part of the Pay Review exercise, please consult with your usual Research Services/Joint Research Office contact.

Types of awards

Individual pay data/employee information can be viewed on the 'Pay Review Table' and 'Pay Review Table for Extract' pages on the Power BI dashboard. The 'Progression status' column demonstrates where an employee currently sits within their grade as of 1 October (i.e., after the expected October spine point has been applied.)

Progression status	Type of award that can be recommended
Automatic	The employee is within the automatic spine points for their grade – therefore they can be awarded an additional increment within this same grade
Contribution (non- automatic)	The employee is within the contribution spine points for their grade – therefore they can be awarded an additional increment within this contribution section of the grade
Top of automatic	The employee has reached the top spine point for the automatic range of their grade – therefore, if there are contribution points available, they can be awarded an additional increment to take them into the contribution range for the grade
Reached max	The employee has reached the maximum spine point for their grade and/or contribution range (if it applies to their grade) and is unable to proceed any further. In this instance they can be awarded a one-off payment only

Employees on fixed salaries can be awarded either a consolidated pay award or a one-off payment.

The following grades have no salary cap and employees progress to fixed salaries above the value of the top spine point for the grade:

- Lecturer/Assistant Professor
- Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor
- Senior Teaching Fellow
- Principal Teaching Fellow

For more information, please see our [salary webpages](#).