

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision

SRP

Supervisory review process

SRP35

Compensation practices

**Version effective as of
15 Dec 2019**

First version in the format of the consolidated
framework.



BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS

Supervisory review of compensation practices

35.1 Risk management must be embedded in the culture of a bank. It should be a critical focus of the chief executive officer, chief risk officer, chief operating officer, senior management, trading desk and other business line heads and employees in making strategic and day-to-day decisions. For a broad and deep risk management culture to develop and be maintained over time, compensation policies must not be unduly linked to short-term accounting profit generation. Compensation policies should be linked to longer-term capital preservation and the financial strength of the firm, and should consider risk-adjusted performance measures. In addition, a bank should provide adequate disclosure regarding its compensation policies to stakeholders. Each bank's board of directors and senior management have the responsibility to mitigate the risks arising from remuneration policies in order to ensure effective firm-wide risk management.¹

Footnotes

¹ *Compensation practices at large financial institutions are one factor among many that contributed to the financial crisis that began in 2007. High short-term profits led to generous bonus payments to employees without adequate regard to the longer-term risks they imposed on their firms. These incentives amplified the excessive risk-taking that has threatened the global financial system and left firms with fewer resources to absorb losses as risks materialised. The lack of attention to risk also contributed to the large, in some cases extreme absolute level of compensation in the industry. As a result, to improve compensation practices and strengthen supervision in this area, particularly for systemically important firms, the Financial Stability Board published its Principles for Sound Compensation Practices in April 2009. In addition, the Basel Committee published The Compensation Principles and Standards Assessment Methodology in January 2010 and Corporate Governance Principles for Banks in 2015. These guidelines accompany this standard.*

35.2 A bank's board of directors must actively oversee the compensation system's design and operation, which should not be controlled primarily by the chief executive officer and management team. Relevant board members and employees must have independence and expertise in risk management and compensation.

- 35.3** In addition, the board of directors must monitor and review the compensation system to ensure the system includes adequate controls and operates as intended. The practical operation of the system should be regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with policies and procedures. Compensation outcomes, risk measurements, and risk outcomes should be regularly reviewed for consistency with intentions.
- 35.4** Staff that are engaged in the financial and risk control areas must be independent, have appropriate authority, and be compensated in a manner that is independent of the business areas they oversee and commensurate with their key role in the firm. Effective independence and appropriate authority of such staff is necessary to preserve the integrity of financial and risk management's influence on incentive compensation.
- 35.5** Compensation must be adjusted for all types of risk so that remuneration is balanced between the profit earned and the degree of risk assumed in generating the profit. In general, both quantitative measures and human judgment should play a role in determining the appropriate risk adjustments, including those that are difficult to measure such as liquidity risk and reputation risk.
- 35.6** Compensation outcomes must be symmetric with risk outcomes and compensation systems should link the size of the bonus pool to the overall performance of the firm. Employees' incentive payments should be linked to the contribution of the individual and business to the firm's overall performance.
- 35.7** Compensation payout schedules must be sensitive to the time horizon of risks. Profits and losses of different activities of a financial firm are realised over different periods of time. Variable compensation payments should be deferred accordingly. Payments should not be finalised over short periods where risks are realised over long periods. Management should question payouts for income that cannot be realised or whose likelihood of realisation remains uncertain at the time of payout.
- 35.8** The mix of cash, equity and other forms of compensation must be consistent with risk alignment. The mix will vary depending on the employee's position and role. The firm should be able to explain the rationale for its mix.

35.9 Supervisory review of compensation practices must be rigorous and sustained, and deficiencies must be addressed promptly with the appropriate supervisory action. Supervisors should include compensation practices in their risk assessment of firms, and firms should work constructively with supervisors to ensure their practices are adequate. Regulations and supervisory practices will

naturally differ across jurisdictions and potentially among authorities within a country. Nevertheless, all supervisors should strive for effective review and intervention.