

# Benchmark the decision. Not the job title.

A 24-point evidence test for leaders deciding where to hold, correct or invest in pay—without turning one market number into policy.

## THE DECISION

What should this organisation pay for this role, at this level, in this talent market—given the value of the work, internal equity and the cost the business can sustain?

## USE THIS BEFORE

annual review, a band redesign, critical-role pricing or a large correction budget.

# Can the pay decision survive scrutiny?

0 = absent / 1 = partial / 2 = clear, relevant and evidenced

|    |                                                                                    |                                |                                |                                |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 01 | <b>Decision</b>                                                                    |                                |                                |                                |
|    | The business decision and roles in scope are explicitly defined.                   | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 02 | <b>Role scope</b>                                                                  |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Each role is matched by outcomes, authority, level and complexity—not title alone. | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 03 | <b>Reward definition</b>                                                           |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Fixed pay, allowances, variable pay, benefits and equity are separated.            | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 04 | <b>Reference market</b>                                                            |                                |                                |                                |
|    | The peer group reflects where the organisation recruits and loses talent.          | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 05 | <b>Source quality</b>                                                              |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Sources are dated, relevant and interpreted with their sample limitations.         | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 06 | <b>Position policy</b>                                                             |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Leaders have chosen where to lead, match or hold the market by role type.          | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 07 | <b>Internal equity</b>                                                             |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Comparable work and unexplained pay differences have been tested.                  | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 08 | <b>Compression</b>                                                                 |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Manager-specialist and new-hire-incumbent compression is visible.                  | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 09 | <b>Affordability</b>                                                               |                                |                                |                                |
|    | The cost of correction is modelled before any promise is made.                     | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 10 | <b>Movement rules</b>                                                              |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Progression through a band has defined evidence and decision criteria.             | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 11 | <b>Exceptions</b>                                                                  |                                |                                |                                |
|    | Counteroffers, premiums and above-range offers have an approval rule.              | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |
| 12 | <b>Governance</b>                                                                  |                                |                                |                                |
|    | An owner, review rhythm and evidence trail exist for future decisions.             | <input type="text" value="0"/> | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> |

TOTAL

\_\_\_\_ / 24

Use the result on page 3 to choose the intervention.

# Choose the smallest intervention the evidence supports.

Do not publish bands or promise corrections until role scope, equity and affordability are reconciled.

0-8

## UNRELIABLE

### DIAGNOSIS

The benchmark cannot explain the role, reference market or total reward consistently.

### NEXT ACTION

Stop price changes. Clarify roles, normalise reward and rebuild the evidence set before adjusting pay.

9-17

## PARTIAL

### DIAGNOSIS

Useful evidence exists, but equity, compression, affordability or governance remains unclear.

### NEXT ACTION

Pilot critical roles, model correction scenarios and define exception rules before scaling the framework.

18-24

## DECISION-READY

### DIAGNOSIS

The method is coherent enough to support targeted, explainable and repeatable pay decisions.

### NEXT ACTION

Approve priority actions, record the decision trail and operate a scheduled refresh rather than a wholesale redesign.

### THE 90-DAY WORKFLOW

DAYS 1-15 Define the decision, roles, levels and reward structure.

DAYS 16-35 Build the source set and reference markets.

DAYS 36-55 Test equity, compression, affordability and exceptions.

DAYS 56-75 Design ranges, movement rules and governance.

DAYS 76-90 Approve priority actions and manager communication.

### READ THE FULL GUIDE

[elementmea.com/post/compensation-benchmarking-in-the-uae-how-to-pay-competitively-without-overspending-2026-guide](https://elementmea.com/post/compensation-benchmarking-in-the-uae-how-to-pay-competitively-without-overspending-2026-guide)