

**CENTRALIZED POSITIONS OF RESEARCH SCIENTISTS,  
GS-14 AND ABOVE HANDBOOK**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook replaces VHA policy defining information required by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to evaluate research scientist positions and other professional positions funded by ORD for classification at General Schedule (GS)-14 and above.
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This constitutes a revision of existing policy from Notice to Handbook format. There are no major content changes.
- 3. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VHA Directive 1200, to be issued.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Research and Development (12) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook.
- 5. RESCISSION:** This VHA Handbook rescinds VHA Notice 98-04, dated November 5, 1998.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working date of May 2006.

S/ by Dennis H. Smith for  
Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.  
Under Secretary for Health

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## CENTRALIZED POSITIONS OF RESEARCH SCIENTISTS, GS-14 AND ABOVE

### 1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook defines the information required by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to evaluate research scientist positions and other professional positions funded by ORD for classification at General Schedule (GS)-14 and above. Included are Schedule B appointments costed to Medical Research Service (MRS), Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D), Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), and the Cooperative Studies Program (CSP). **NOTE:** *Because scientific projects are time-limited, scientist positions can be supported only as Schedule B appointments rather than Career or Career Conditional appointments.*

### 2. SCOPE

a. Positions typically eligible for consideration are those whose primary function is scientific investigation in basic or applied research in the biological, medical, health, physical, veterinary medical, computer, social (including economics), or mathematical (including statistics) sciences; in engineering; in industrial design; and in psychology.

b. The ORD will, at the request of Human Resources Management (HRM) Service (05), also assess nominations for classification at GS-14 and GS-15 for select positions costed to the medical care appropriation, provided that those positions include scientific investigation as a significant duty. If the ORD recommends that such an incumbent be promoted, the promotion may only be effected with the approvals of the local medical center Director and Network Director within allocated medical care ceilings. Promotions to GS-15 require the approval of the Under Secretary for Health, or designee (see VHA Supp., MP-5, Pt. I, Ch. 250 or superseding document).

### 3. LOCAL REVIEW

a. Each nomination for position classification at GS-14 and GS-15 will initially be evaluated and rated by the nominating Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center using procedures outlined in the Research Grade Evaluation Guide (hereafter referred to as the Guide), published in June 1964. In lieu of the Guide, VA facilities may use a comparable classification approach for positions not covered by the Guide, such as engineering systems development positions and economists.

b. As prescribed by the Guide, the nominating VA facility must constitute a promotion review panel consisting of a position classifier and several researchers who will serve as subject matter specialists with knowledge of the degree of novelty and complexity of the nominee's research projects and the contributions and professional stature of the nominee. In addition to reviewing the nominee's position description, the panel will review the nominee's qualifications and professional development, specifically appraising the nominee's professional achievements, publications, appearance before professional organizations, and reviews of the nominee's work. **NOTE:** *It is recommended that the panel members meet face-to-face to discuss the nomination.*

c. All subject matter specialist members of the panel will record their individual appraisals of the nominee on VA Form 5-4670, Position Classification Worksheet for Research Positions. The position classifier will subsequently use VA Form 3963, Position Report, to record the classifier's analysis and evaluation of the position. These written evaluations must be included in the nomination application to be submitted to VHA Headquarters, as described in Appendix B.

#### 4. CENTRAL REVIEW

a. Nominations for classification at GS-14 and GS-15 will be submitted to the appropriate VHA Headquarters research service (MRS, RR&D, HSR&D, or CSP). Nominations will be reviewed for scientific merit by central Research Scientist Evaluation Committees constituted by the research services, using guidelines which provide a systematic approach to the consideration of credentials. The specific factors used in the review process are described in the Guide.

b. Criteria to be used in evaluating the nominations include, but will not be limited to, the following:

(1) A minimum of 5/8ths time commitment to VA, evidenced by a 5/8ths VA-salaried appointment or an approved eligibility determination.

(2) A record of successful past and current VA research support and/or successful competition as a principal investigator for significant, extra-VA research funding from a national program that utilizes a standard of scientific merit review equivalent to that of VA.

(3) Publications in refereed scientific and professional journals widely read within the nominee's field, particularly as the first or senior author.

(4) Invitations to speak or chair sessions at national or international scientific meetings.

(5) Membership on national scientific advisory or merit review committees and/or editorial boards of scientific and/or professional journals.

(6) Recognition by peers as a leader in a research field.

(7) Interaction with clinicians, researchers, and/or managers in support of the patient care and research and development programs of the local VA medical center.

(8) An active role in the training of young scientists and in formal teaching.

c. Recommendation for action on the nomination will be forwarded by the reviewing Research Scientist Evaluation Committee to the appropriate Research Service Director for acceptance or rejection, who will in turn forward the recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO) for concurrence and Human Resources Management for approval or disapproval.

#### 5. INQUIRIES

Information regarding points of contact for issues related to this Handbook is contained in Appendix A.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Inquiries regarding centralized positions of research scientists, GS-14 and GS-15 should be directed to:

a. **Medical Research Service (121E)**  
(202) 408-3613

b. **Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (122)**  
(202) 408-3670

c. **Health Services Research and Development Service (124D)**  
(202) 273-8256

d. **Cooperative Studies Program (125B)**  
(202) 273-8248

2. Contact information may also be found at the following web site:

**<http://www.va.gov/resdev>**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF NOMINATIONS  
FOR REQUEST FOR EVALUATION OF  
RESEARCH SCIENTISTS FOR CENTRALIZED POSITIONS**

1. **Format.** Applications must consist of single-spaced typed pages. Use only letter-quality print; do not use a dot matrix printer. Do not use photo reduction or fonts less than 11 point.

2. **Requirements for Application.** Each application is to consist of the following materials:

a. A cover sheet with the title, "Evaluation of Research Scientist for Centralized Position." The cover sheet must list the following information in the order specified:

(1) Name of applicable Research Service (Medical Research Service, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service, Health Services Research and Development Service, or the Cooperative Studies Program).

(2) Name of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center.

(3) Nominee's name and degree.

(4) Nominee's date of birth.

(5) Position currently held (title, grade, and step) and type of position held (e.g., Schedule B).

(6) Position requested (title and grade) and type of position requested (e.g., Schedule B).

(7) Nominee's current VA employment status (in 8ths).

(8) Number of years employed by VA.

(9) Nominee's academic title (indicate tenure status), affiliation, and location.

(10) Name of departmental chairperson where nominee holds academic position.

(11) Site of nominee's research performance, e.g., laboratory or office. **NOTE:** *If this location is not at the VA medical center, the approval letter for the off-site waiver must be appended.*

b. A letter from the medical center Director formally transmitting the nomination, recommending the nomination, and specifying the type of position requested (Schedule B for research support or Schedule B and/or Career for medical care support).

c. A letter from the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development (ACOS/R&D) containing the ACOS/R&D's assessment of the nominee and recommendation pertaining to the

request.

- d. A letter from the Research and Development (R&D) Committee, which includes a recommendation pertaining to the nomination. This letter needs to include an assessment of the nominee, commentary on the nominee's independence, and description of the nominee's working relationships and interactions with other investigators at the VA medical center.
- e. A statement describing the research area of the nominee and its relevance to VA health care. Include research accomplishments considered pertinent to the evaluation of the nominee, a description of the complexity of the research problems undertaken, and the guidelines and originality used in resolving research questions. **NOTE:** *Refer to the Research Grade Evaluation Guide for additional information.*
- f. A current curriculum vitae and bibliography.
- g. The current VA funding (amount, title of project, role, i.e., principal or co-principal investigator) and year of last approved Merit Review or other VA research support. For currently VA-funded research, completed: VA Form 10-1313-2, Merit Review Application - Summary Description of Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-3, Merit Review Application - Current Funds and First Year Request for Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-4, Merit Review Application - Estimated Expenses of Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-7, Merit Review Application - Investigator's Total VA and Non-VA Research Support (Current and Pending); and VA Form 10-1313-8, Merit Review Application - Investigator's Total VA and Non-VA Research/Development Support. **NOTE:** *The preceding forms are part of a set, i.e., VA Form 10-1313-1-8, Merit Review Application.*
- h. The current extra-VA funding (amount, title of project, source, complete grant number, years of support, role, i.e., principal or co-principal investigator). For all current non-VA funded research, include the budget page and abstract.
- i. A breakdown of research funding history, both VA and extra-VA, in spreadsheet format.
- j. Five letters of support from leaders in the nominee's field of research. The letters should provide input on the nominee's reputation as a scientist, standing in the nominee's chosen field of research, and other factors which may be relevant to the evaluation process. If the nominee holds an academic position, one letter of recommendation must be from the Departmental Chairperson.
- k. Two journal publications chosen by the nominee as being representative of the nominee's best work (16 copies of each).
- l. The position description signed by appropriate officials, i.e., immediate supervisor and medical center Director. Optional Form 8 (Revised 1/85), Item 15.e should indicate title of position and grade proposed.
- m. The local promotion review panel evaluations and rating of position and incumbent, using the Research Grade Evaluation Guide or equivalent. These include VA Form 5-3963, Position Report, and VA Form 5-4670, Position Classification Worksheet for Research Positions. A VA Form 5-4670 must



be completed and signed by each member of the local evaluation panel.

**3. Mailing Addresses.** The original and 15 copies of the application should be mailed to the address listed for the appropriate research service:

**a. Medical Research Service**

Medical Research Service (121E)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

*If courier or commercial overnight delivery service is used, send to:*

Medical Research Service (121E)  
1400 Eye Street, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 408-3600

**b. Rehabilitation Research and Development Service**

Rehabilitation R&D Service (122)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

*If courier or commercial overnight delivery service is used, send to:*

Rehabilitation R&D Service (122)  
1400 Eye Street, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 408-3670

**c. Health Services Research and Development Service**

Health Services R&D Service (124D)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 273-8256

**d. Cooperative Studies Program**

Cooperative Studies Program (125B)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 273-8248

4. **Due Date**. Nominations will be reviewed semi-annually. The deadlines are March 1 and September 1 annually, to coincide with the deadlines for nominations for Research Career Scientist awards.

5. **Limitations**. There is no limitation on the number of nominations that will be accepted by each research service from a VA medical center during a given fiscal year.