

ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

Policies and Procedures

Title: Compensation System for Senior Level Employees

Number: P&P 451.7-ARS

Date: December 4, 2002

Originating Office: REE Policy Branch, Human Resources Division, AFM/ARS

This Replaces: ARS 451.7, dated 6/3/93

Distribution: ARS Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This P&P describes the pay and compensation system for employees in the SL AND ST pay plans.

Table Of Contents

1.	Policy	3
2.	Promotion of National Program Leaders to SL Positions	3
3.	Promotion of Research Scientists to ST Positions	3
4.	Pay Setting Upon Promotion to SL or ST Positions	3
5.	Increases to Higher Pay Band for ST Employees	4
6.	Annual Pay (Comparability Adjustments)	4
7.	Pay Increase Restriction	4
8.	Individual Pay Increases	4
9.	Procedures for Consideration of Individual Pay Increases	5
10.	Summary of Responsibilities	6
11.	Glossary	7

1. Policy

General increases affecting the Senior Executive Service (SES) pay structure will result in corresponding increases being reflected in the pay structure for Senior Level (SL) and Scientific and Professional (ST) positions to the fullest extent consistent with statute and regulation. Should any such increase to the pay structure result in the pay rate of an SL or ST employee falling below the minimum rate set for the employee's pay band, the employee will receive the minimum rate set for the pay band.

2. Promotion of National Program Leaders to SL Positions

Promotion of National Program Leaders (NPL) to SL positions are dependent upon the recommendation of the Deputy Administrator, National Program Staff (NPS), and the availability of SL slots from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Deputy Administrator makes the recommendation for promotion based on the results of the NPS Senior NPL Evaluation Process.

3. Promotion of Research Scientists to ST Positions

Promotion of Research Scientists to ST positions are dependent upon the recommendation of the Administrator, ARS and the availability of ST slots from OPM. The Administrator makes the recommendation for promotion based on the results of the Supergrade Panel administered under the Research Position Evaluation System (RPES). This Panel evaluates research scientist positions using point ranges extrapolated from the OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG), as follows:

RGEG Score	Pay Band Placement
56 to 64	Pay Band I
66 to 74	Pay Band II
76 & above	Pay Band III

4. Pay Setting Upon Promotion to SL or ST Positions

The new pay rate of an employee promoted to an SL or ST position will equal the employee's base salary at the GS/GM-15 level (i.e., not including any locality pay) plus 6 percent, rounded to the closest whole dollar figure. Should the resulting salary figure be less than the minimum salary established for Pay Band I, the employee's salary will be set at that minimum.

5. Increases to Higher Pay Band for ST Employees

The REE Policy Branch, Human Resources Division, will refer to the Administrator those ST employees warranting conversion to a higher pay band based on RGEG scores determined by the Supergrade Panel. Subject to concurrence by the Department, the Administrator will approve an increase to the higher pay band, with the new salary equating to the ST employee's salary at the lower band plus 6 percent, rounded to the closest whole dollar figure. Should the resulting figure be less than the minimum salary established for the higher pay band, the employee's salary will be set at that minimum.

6. Annual Pay (Comparability Adjustments)

Effective the same date that each rate of basic pay for the SES is adjusted by the President under 5 U.S.C. 5382(c), the rate of pay for employees in SL and ST positions will be adjusted as follows:

- Employees in Pay Band I will be given a percentage adjustment in pay (rounded to the closest whole dollar figure) equivalent to the average percentage adjustment in pay for ES-1, ES-2, and ES-3.
- Employees in Pay Band II will be given a percentage adjustment in pay (rounded to the closest whole dollar figure) equivalent to the average percentage adjustment in pay for ES-3, ES-4, and ES-5.
- Employees in Pay Band III will be given a percentage adjustment in pay (rounded to the closest whole dollar figure) equivalent to the average percentage adjustment in pay for ES-5 and ES-6.

7. Pay Increase Restriction

By law, pay of an individual in an SL or ST position may not be increased more than once in any 12-month period. However, annual pay (comparability) adjustments are excluded from this restriction.

8. Individual Pay Increases

An SL or ST employee may receive a pay increase within a pay band at the discretion of the Administrator. An SL employee may also receive an increase to a higher pay band at the discretion of the Administrator. (The increase to a higher pay band for an ST employee is described in Section 5). The decisions of whether or not to grant such an increase, the timing of the increase, and the amount of the increase are neither appealable nor grievable.

Individual pay increases are not intended to be granted on a routine or periodic basis. (In most cases, the difference between an employee's pay rate and the top rate for that pay band preclude a significant pay increase each year). Therefore, recommendations for a pay increase for an individual will be based on considerations that place the employee **somewhat above the norm for an SL/ST employee**. For example, a key factor considered is performance. Performance above the norm for an SL/ST employee would be similar to the level appropriate for a quality step increase for GS employees or the level of SES performance where consideration would be given to a Presidential Rank nomination, pay rate adjustment, or a higher level SES bonus.

Other factors to be considered are:

- Recent scientific accomplishment or impact on program direction.
- Recent increase in professional stature.
- Alignment with other positions and incumbents having comparable responsibilities and qualifications.
- Pay for comparable private sector personnel.
- The relationship to pay for employees in SES positions.
- Changes in position content.

9. Procedures for Consideration of Individual Pay Increases

The process described below is designed to provide the Administrator with the information necessary to manage a salary structure that compensates ARS top scientists fairly and effectively. It is not intended to implement a formal system for determining individual pay increases.

Area Directors/Deputy Administrator, NPS

- At the end of each performance appraisal year, review the SL/ST employees in their organizations for consideration of pay increases. By February 15 of each year, send resulting recommendations for individual pay increases to the REE Policy Branch, Human Resources Division, for forwarding to the SL/ST Pay Advisory Group. Each recommendation will consist of a not-to-exceed two-page justification. Also, provide the REE Policy Branch with a copy of the latest two performance appraisals for **all** SL/ST employees, whether recommended for an increase or not.

NOTE: As stated in Section 7, the law restricts pay increases for employees in the SL/ST

pay system to once within a 12-month period. Therefore, employees already in ST positions may not receive timely increases to higher pay bands (as a result of recommendations of Supergrade Panels), if they otherwise have received an increase within a pay band during the last year under the procedures in this section. Consequently, Area Directors should take this into consideration in deciding when to recommend an individual ST employee for an increase within a pay band.

SL/ST Pay Advisory Group

- Review each of the recommendations for a pay increase and informally report on findings to the Administrator. Any recommendations made to the Administrator are advisory and not binding.

Administrator

- After consideration of the findings and recommendations of the SL/ST Pay Advisory Group, determine which employees receive an increase and the amount of each increase.

NOTE: An increase to a higher pay band also requires prior Departmental approval.

10. Summary of Responsibilities

The Administrator

- Approves all increases within pay bands or to higher pay bands for employees in SL or ST positions.

Area Directors and the Deputy Administrator, NPS

- Recommend increases within pay bands for employees in SL and ST positions and increases to higher pay bands for employees in SL positions.

The REE Policy Branch, Human Resources Division

- Manages the compensation system for SL and ST employees.

The REE Services Branch, Human Resources Division

- Manages the Supergrade Panel System.

11. Glossary

ES. Senior Executive Service Pay Plan.

GS. General Schedule Pay Plan.

NPL. National Program Leader

NPS. National Program Staff.

REE. Research, Education, and Economics.

RGEG. Research Grade Evaluation Guide.

RPES. Research Position Evaluation System.

SES. Senior Executive Service.

Senior Level Employees. Employees who occupy SL or ST positions.

SL. Senior Level Pay Plan.

SL Positions. Positions classified above GS-15 that do not meet the functional criteria for inclusion in the SES as defined in 5 U.S.C.3132(a)(2), or the ST Pay Plan. Such positions are staff positions and typically would be assigned to the Office of the Administrator or to NPS.

ST. Scientific and Professional Pay Plan.

ST Positions. Positions classified above GS-15 based on the application of the RGEG and which do not meet the functional criteria for inclusion in the SES.

SL/ST Pay Advisory Group. An *ad hoc* group whose purpose is to review documentation and provide advice to the Administrator on recommended pay increases for individual SL and ST employees. The Group consists of three Senior Executives appointed by the Administrator and includes representation from both the field and NPS.

SL/ST Pay System. An ungraded pay structure consisting of three pay bands as follows:

- Pay Band I - Any whole dollar pay figure starting at one dollar more than the rate for GS-15/10 and ending at one dollar less than the ES-3 pay level of the SES.

- Pay Band II - Any whole dollar pay figure starting at the ES-3 pay level of the SES and ending at one dollar less than the ES-5 pay level of the SES.
- Pay Band III - Any whole dollar pay figure starting at the ES-5 pay level of the SES and ending at the ES-6 pay level of the SES.

JAMES H. BRADLEY
Deputy Administrator
Administrative and Financial Management