

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Research & Development

CENTRALIZED POSITIONS OVERVIEW AND UPDATES

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Overview

- Purpose of Centralized Positions
- Overview of Changes
- Initiating and submitting Packet
- Documents required
- Timelines/ Resources
- PD Format
- IRBNet Demo

What are Centralized Positions?

- Promotions for professional research scientists
- Not for Hybrid Title 38 employees even if performing research
- Can be:
 - Promotion for existing research position (to GS 14 or 15)
 - Or new position (i.e. New Merit awardee)
- No time in grade requirement (can go from GS 13 to 15, if candidate meets standards in RGEN)
- Major duties must include scientific investigation (25% or more)

Other Considerations

Centralized Positions at GS 14/15:

- Hybrid Title 38 (HT38), Administrative and/or supervisory positions are not eligible for this process.
- Must meet the standards in the OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide
- Positions must have a minimum of a 5/8ths ORD funded appointment (unless waiver in place)
- Supervision cannot be part of the Major duties

Note for Hybrid Title 38 Positions

- Hybrid Title 38 (HT38) occupations appointments and promotions are managed by HR Staff
- However, promotions to GS 14/15 for HT38 positions funded by ORD still require CRADO/DEAN sign-off
- See the appropriate VACO funding service's Promotions POC for details and procedures

Overview of Changes (Effective March 1, mandatory May 1)

VISN Central Classification Unit Review not required

- Local promotion panel required
- Only HR Classification will be at VA ORD Level

Changes to Review Panel:

- Single centralized panel reviews All promotions
- 4 meetings/year
- All services go to rolling submission
- VACO Reviewers still matched by expertise

Packet changes:

Streamlining content

Initiating Submission

- Please follow directions found at:
https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm
- Go to: <https://gov.irbnet.org>
- **All nominations must be initiated and submitted by the local VA R&D Service and not by the nominee.**
- In IRBNet, click on ‘Create New Project.’
Project Title format: Promotion_VA Service_NAME_VAMC_GSLevel
(i.e. Promotion_RRD_Smith_San Francisco_GS14).
- In Designer, click on ‘Start A Wizard’ and select the smart form entitled: ‘VA Promotions Cover Sheet’.

IRBNet Smart Form:

- **Choose the type of submission**
 - Current employee or New appointment
- **Follow Smart Form prompts to enter Nominee and position information**
 - Click on next to advance to each new page.
- **Research Impact Statement**
 - Copy and paste into the Smart Form (2500 words maximum).
- **Research Statement should include:**
 - nominee's research area
 - relevance to and impact on VA healthcare
 - Include specific research accomplishments that led to impacts on patient care or the VA system
 - description of the complexity of the research problems undertaken originality used in resolving research questions

IRBNet Smart Form, Continued:

- Continue to Cover Page Complete section
- Review the list of additional documents needed
- Then click on “Save & Exit”
- This will take you back to the Designer page
- **Use Attach New Document’ button on the Designer page to upload supporting documents**

Supporting Documents to Upload:

- **Combine Similar ‘Scientific’ Attachments**
- **HR documents are not combined**
- **Ensure you select document type**
- **Documents types will be: ‘Letter’, ‘CV/Resume’, or ‘Other’**
- **Use the Standard Descriptors for each document**
 - See descriptors in parentheses in following slides

Supporting Documents:

1. “Letters” – Single PDF

Medical Center Letter

3 Letters from colleagues

2 should be from scientists outside of local VA/University

2. “Curriculum Vitae ”

See instructions

3. “Funding”

VA, non-VA and 12 yr funding history

4. “Publications” (Two)

Supporting Documents - HR

5. “OF-8”

- Please upload OF-8 as a separate, editable form
- Common issues:
 - Box 10: These positions must be excepted service
 - Item 15e: needs to indicate title of position, series and proposed grade
 - Block 20 must be signed by the Supervisor (i.e. ACOS/R) not the AO.
 - **Box 21 Left Blank**

Supporting Documents

6. “Position Description”

- Upload in MS Word format
- Must be a 4 factor Research format PD for Title 5 positions
- Must not be supervisory
- Do not use the 9 factor FES PD template

Supporting Documents

7. “Local Panel Evaluations”

- Upload as Single PDF to IRBNet
- 3 Position Classification Worksheets (VA Form 4670)
- Each member completes and signs VA Form 4670

Local Panel Requirements

- Local SMEs should not have real or perceived conflicts **with the nominee** (e.g., subordinates, collaborators, family members or close personal relations, anyone who would gain financially from the nominee's promotion).
- VA personnel from other VA medical facilities may serve on the local panel when there is an insufficient pool of scientists at the requesting VA medical facility.
- Panel members must be at a level equivalent to or higher than GS level sought by nominee

Note: local panel

Total Point Value must be consistent with the requested grade level (e.g. GS-14 = 36-44; GS-15 = 46-50), and must meet the factor level fully to be credited at the level (i.e. D or E)

POINTS BY FACTOR AND LEVEL

Level	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
A	2	2	2	4
B	4	4	4	8
C	6	6	6	12
D	8	8	8	16
E	10	10	10	20

Grade Level – To determine the grade level of a position, add the point values for all assigned factor levels. Use the Grade Conversion Table below to convert the total points to a grade.

GRADE CONVERSION TABLE

Point Values	Grade
8 – 14	GS-11
16 – 24	GS-12
26 – 34	GS-13
36 – 44	GS-14
46 – 50	GS-15

Supporting Documents

8. “Org Chart”

- SIGNED “Official” current organizational chart
- (Appropriate signatures will vary with local policy).
- Must indicate where the new GS 14 or GS 15 position fits in the local VA Research Program’s organization.

Submitting Packet

- **Before Submission, an R&D office Representative electronically signs the package**
 - See left menu bar for the 'Sign this Package' option,
 - Select 'Department Representative' for the signing role from the drop down.
 - Use your IRBNet Username and Password to sign.
- **Once the Smart Form is complete, supporting documents are uploaded, and the package is signed:**
 - Choose 'Submit this Package' from the left Menu bar in the Project Administration menu
 - Select Board: VA Centralized Positions, Washington, DC
 - Follow the submission prompts
 - Submission type should be 'Other'

Timelines (All Services)

We will accept promotions prepared under old directions until May 15, 2023

Submissions accepted on a rolling basis to IRBNet

- Committee review:
 - Mid March
 - Mid June
 - Mid September
 - Mid December
- Complete and correct nominations must be received NLT 30 days before the next scheduled meeting to make that meeting

Instructions:

- For contacts and instructions on how to prepare and submit nomination packets:
https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm
- This webpage also has:
 - Forms
 - FAQs
 - Webinar Recordings and handouts

Guidance

- VHA Program Guide 1200.03 for Centralized Positions:
<https://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/ProgramGuide-1200-03.pdf>
- OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG):
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gresch.pdf>

Contacts for questions:

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RR&D:

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Position Description Format

Note for factors:

- Each Factor in the RGEG has 5 levels, A-E
- Read each factor level in RGEG
- Ensure language incorporated in PD reflects the qualifications/level of the candidate

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Position Description Format

Factor 1: Research Assignment

Consider and Address the following when writing Factor 1:

- scope and complexity, objectives
- problem breadth and depth;
- availability of related research studies;
- extent to which objectives can be defined;
- number of unknowns and critical obstacles;
- variety and depth of knowledge and expertise required
- expected impact of end results, products, or outcomes.

Position Description Format

Standards for Factor 1 at GS 14 and 15 level include:

- Scope and complexity are at a level requiring subdivision into separate phases, some of which are considerably broad and complex;
- Problems are exceptionally difficult and unyielding to investigation;
- Require unconventional or novel approaches or complex research techniques
- Results may include:
 - a major advance or opening of the way for extensive related development;
 - progress in areas of exceptional interest to the scientific community;
 - important changes in theories, methods, and techniques;
 - opening significant new avenues for further study; or
 - contributions answering important questions in the field.

Position Description Format

Factor 2: Supervisory Controls/Supervision Received

When writing factor, consider/address:

- Manner in which the researcher's supervisor assigns work;
- Researcher's freedom to determine a course of action;
- Researcher's opportunity for procedural innovation;
- Degree of the supervisor's acceptance of the researcher's recommendations, decisions, and final products.

Position Description Format

Factor 2: At the highest factor level, Candidate:

- formulates research plans and hypotheses;
- carries out the project plan;
- interprets findings
- locates and explores the most promising areas of research

Minimal Supervision by Supervisor

Position Description Format

Factor 3: Guidelines and Originality

- literature in the field, procedures, instructions, or precedents and may be adapted or modified to meet the requirements of the current assignment.
- Address the following:
 - Extent and nature of available written guides;
 - intrinsic difficulty encountered in applying guides ; and
 - Degree of judgment required in selecting, interpreting, and adapting guidelines.

Position Description Format

Factor 3: Guidelines and originality (continued)

For creativity, also consider/address:

- original and independent creation, analysis, reasoning, evaluation, and judgment; and
- originality in interpreting findings and translating findings into a form usable by others.

Position Description Format

Factor 4: Contributions, Impact and Stature

- Contributions:
 - Incumbent's research and contributions field
 - Number and quality of research publications, patents
 - Active role or record of training junior scientists and teaching
 - Local and national committee service to VA and at affiliate
- Impact:

Degree to which researcher:

 - has an impact on scientific and/or societal issues;
 - sets new research directions;
 - develops new methods, techniques, or tools; and/or
 - drives management and policy outcomes

Position Description Format

Factor 4 - continued

Stature:

- Invitations to speak or chair sessions at national or international scientific meetings.
- Membership on national scientific advisory, merit review committees, grant review committees
- Membership on editorial boards of journals.
- Recognition as a leader in the field of research

IRBNet Demo

To learn more about VA research:
www.research.va.gov