Overview

• Purpose of Centralized Positions
• Title 5 vs. Hybrid Title 38 occupations
• Scientific Section of Packet
• Position Description Format and Tips
• HR Section requirements
• Timelines for Submission
• Resources
What are Centralized Positions?

- This program evaluates promotions for professional research scientist of non-supervisory Title 5 positions funded by ORD
- This program is 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 requesting GS 14 or 15)
- There is no time in grade requirement (i.e. possible to go from GS 13 to 15, for example, if candidate meets standards)
- Primary duties must be scientific investigation
Other Considerations

Centralized Positions at GS 14/15:

- Hybrid Title 38 (HT38), Administrative and/or supervisory positions are not eligible for this program.
- Must meet the standards in the OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide
- Positions must have a minimum of a 5/8ths VA salaried appointment unless there is a waiver in place.
Note for Hybrid Title 38 Positions

- Hybrid Title 38 (HT38) occupations appointments and promotions are managed by the VISN/Facility 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
Determine the Correct Job Series and Title – Title 5

1. Consider the degree and education of candidate
2. Look at the Research duties and Research Assignment
3. Consult OPM guides for qualification standards:

References:  https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/

Common Title 5 Job series for Research

- Common Title 5 Job series include **but are not limited to:**

**0400 - NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES GROUP**
- 0401 – Research Biologist
- 0403 – Research Microbiologist
- 0405 – Research Pharmacologist
- 0413 – Research Physiologist

**0601 – Research Health Scientist**

Other occupations in the 0600 series may be Title 38 – consult your Local HR Staff.

**1300 – PHYSICAL SCIENCES GROUP**
- 1320 – Research Chemist

**1500 – Mathematics and Statistical Group**
- 1530 – Statistician

Common Title 38 Job series for Researchers

Common Hybrid Title 38 Position series include **but are not limited to**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0180</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0630</td>
<td>Dietetics &amp; Nutrition Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0663</td>
<td>Physical Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0665</td>
<td>Audiologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0667</td>
<td>Orthotist-Prosthetist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0185</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0631</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0665</td>
<td>Speech/Language Pathologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0858</td>
<td>Biomedical Engineer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Hybrid Title 38 Hybrid (HT38) occupation appointments and promotions are managed by the VISN/Facility HR Staff.

Appointments to GS 14/15 for HT38 positions funded by ORD still require CRADO/DEAN sign-off, so please contact your services POC for promotions for procedures once the HT38 boarding process has been completed.
Packet: Scientific Section

- Please follow directions found at: [https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm](https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm)
- Cover sheet – Use correct version
  - Current Employee
  - New Appointment
- Letters from VAMC – see instructions and required statements
- Research/Impact statement
  - Nominee’s research area and its relevance to and impact on VA healthcare.
  - Specific impacts on patient care or the VA healthcare system
  - Description of the complexity of the research problems undertaken, and the guidelines and originality used in resolving research questions.
Packet: Scientific Section

- Curriculum Vitae (CV) – use tables for funding and mentoring history when possible

- Funding – See instructions
  - Current VA Funding
  - Current non-VA Funding
  - Funding history (table format)

- Letters of support from colleagues – Majority should be from scientists outside of local VA/University

- 2 Reprints, etc. as example of most impactful work
Packet – HR Section

• Optional Form (OF)-8 required

• Please upload/email OF-8 as a separate, editable form

• Common issues:
  • Include VISN CCU PD number in box 1
  • Should be marked as new in box 2
  • Box 10: These positions must be excepted service
  • Item 15d: needs to be completed and initialed by the VISN CCU HR classifier.
  • 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 not signed by VISN CCU – is left BLANK for the VHACO HR Classifier’s signature.
  • Make sure VISN CCU completes box 24
Position Description

• Position Description (PD) - Must be in MS Word format
• Must be a 4 factor Research format PD for Title 5 positions
• Must be evaluated by local promotions panel
• Must have a first level VISN CCU Classification review done locally
• Must not be supervisory
• Do not use the 9 factor FES PD template
Position Description Format

• Include the PD# or nominee’s name on each page of the Position Description.
• Number all pages of the PD: 1 of X, 2 of X, 3 of X

1. Heading:
• Position Description
• Title, series, grade (i.e. Research Biologist, GS-0401-14)

2. Introduction:
• Organizational location of the position
• Reporting structure (who position reports to)
• Primary purpose of position
3. Major Duties of position

Describe and list all Duties (Should be focused around conducting research)

Major Duties grouped into percentages of 25% or more. **Common headings/groupings:**

- Conducting Research (or Research Assignment) 50%
- Research Design, Organization and Administration 25%
- Communication and Collaboration 25%

No major duty can be less than 25%
4. Research Factors (Use 4 factor format)

See the OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RREG) for complete standards for each factor:

- Factor 1 - Research Assignment
- Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls (or Supervision Received)
- Factor 3 - Guidelines and Originality
- Factor 4 - Contributions, Impact, and Stature

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>20</td>
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</table>
Factor 1: Research Assignment

Consider and Address the following when writing Factor 1:

- scope and complexity, objectives, and means of accomplishment;
- 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 to solve problems;
- expected impact of end results, products, or outcomes.
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.
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.
Factor 2: At the highest factor level, candidate is the one responsible for independently:

- formulating research plans and hypotheses;
- carrying out the project plan;
- interpreting findings and assessing their organizational and professional applicability; and
- locating and exploring the most promising areas of research

Minimal Supervision by Supervisor
Factor 3: Guidelines and Originality

• Guidelines usually consist of 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 for the PI’s current research when writing:
  • Extent and nature of available written guides;
  • Intrinsic difficulty encountered in applying guides in terms of their ready adaptability to the PI’s current Research; and
  • Degree of judgment required in selecting, interpreting, and adapting guidelines.
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.
Factor 4: Contributions, Impact and Stature

• Contributions:
  • Incumbent’s research and contributions to their field
  • Detail 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:
  Address 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
Factor 4 - continued
Stature (Address the following):
• 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 scientific or professional journals.
• Recognition by peers as a leader in the nominee’s field of research
HR Section – local panel

• Include Position Classification Worksheets (VA Form 4670) - 3 or 5 panel members for each Promotion Review.
• Must convene a panel of at least 3 local SMEs
• Each member completes and **signs** VA Form 4670
• Include VISN CCU HR classification Specialist as a technical advisor
• 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.

• Should be at least at or equivalent to GS level sought by candidate
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
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**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point Values</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 – 14</td>
<td>GS-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 24</td>
<td>GS-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 34</td>
<td>GS-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 44</td>
<td>GS-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 50</td>
<td>GS-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HR Section – CCU

• Submit OF-8, PD & 3 signed local panel evals to VISN CCU

• Local VISN CCU Classifier conducts a first level review of the PD and:
  • Completes and signs Research Position Evaluation Report (ORD Form 2020-1) with a clear justification for the scores assigned for each factor and the Total Point Value and grade level for which the PD has been classified.
  • Validates information in blocks 1-14 on the OF-8
  • Reviews and initials Item 15d on the OF8. (VISN Classifier does NOT sign in Box 21)

• NOTE: If the ORD Form 2020-1 is not signed by the VISN Classifier the promotions package will be returned without action.
Organizational Chart

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

- Carefully read qualifications for each factor in RGEG
- For Title 5 positions, ensure education of candidate and major duties in PD meet standards for the position title.
- Use Four-Factor Research Format for PD
- PD number should be in standard format (HRML 05-06-08)
- Make sure that the Position Title is consistent in:
  - OF-8
  - All throughout PD
  - Position evaluation from local classifier
Preparing Submission

• Submit OF-8 as a separate editable document
• May use PDF portfolio to group documents so OF-8 remains editable
• Submit PD in Microsoft Word format.
• Convert the rest of the completed application package, including publications and CV into PDF
Preparing Submission

• Send parts in separate emails if documents are large. Clearly identify in the Subject line of the email what each email contains. For example:
  • Part 1 – Cover Sheet, VAMC support letter, research statement, CV, funding history, professional letters of support The Subject Line will read as such: Dr. John Public, GS-14, Part 1
  • Part 2 – Supporting documents The Subject Line will read as such: Dr. John Public, GS-14, Part 2
  • Part 3 – HR documents: OF-8, PD, ORD Form 2020-1, local panel scores, etc. The Subject Line will read as such: Dr. John Public, GS-14, Part 3
    (Note: PD (in MS Word format) and OF-8 (in editable format) must be separate documents, sent in email or included in a PDF portfolio).
  • **DO NOT scan OF-8 or PD.**
Timelines

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW FOR HSR&D

• Submit packets by email to: HSR&D: robert.small@va.gov

• a. Deadline for receipt of applications is March 1 and September 1.
• b. Committee review of applications will be in July and January.
Timelines (continued)

• **SUBMISSION AND REVIEW FOR BLR&D, CSR&D:**

  Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis to: [VHACOBLCSPromotions@va.gov](mailto:VHACOBLCSPromotions@va.gov)

  • Committee review of complete applications will be on a bi-monthly basis (i.e. First week of April, First week of June, etc.)

  • Complete and correct applications must be received at least 30 days before the next scheduled meeting to be included in that meeting.
SUBMISSION AND REVIEW FOR RR&D:

Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis to: rrdreviews@va.gov

For RR&D, promotion review panel of complete applications will be done on an ad hoc basis upon receipt.
Guidance and Instructions:

• For contacts and instructions on how to prepare and submit nomination packets:
  https://www.research.va.gov/resources/centralized_positions.cfm

• 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):
Contacts:

HSR&D:
Robert Small; E-mail: robert.small@va.gov

BLR&D/CSR&D:
Carol Fowler, Ph.D.; E-mail: carol.fowler@va.gov

RR&D:
Ricardo Gonzalez; E-mail: ricardo.gonzalez@va.gov
Questions?

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