

Centralized Positions, GS 14 and above Reviewer quick-start guide

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2/1/2023

Purpose of Promotions Panel –

Evaluate Centralized Position packets – **GS 14 or 15**

- These positions must be **research scientist** positions funded by ORD
- Can be:
 - Promotion for existing research position
 - 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 meet standards)

Packet contents

- Scientific section
 - Cover sheet
 - 1 letter from VAMC
 - Research/Impact statement
 - CV
 - Funding (current VA, current non-VA and funding history)
 - 3 Letters of support from colleagues
 - 2 Reprints, etc as example of most impactful work
- HR section:
 - OF-8 (PD cover page)
 - Position Description (PD)
 - Organizational chart

Your Responsibilities

- Complete and sign VA form 4670 - POSITION CLASSIFICATION WORKSHEET FOR RESEARCH POSITIONS
 - Make sure to assign point values for each factor and a total point value in coordination with the overall grade. Include comments for each factor.
- Evaluate & score each Packet based upon 4 factors:
 - Factor 1- Research Situation or Assignment
 - Factor 2- Supervision Received
 - Factor 3- Guidelines and Originality
 - Factor 4- Contributions, Impact, and Stature (Qualifications and Scientific Contributions)

Point/Grading System:

- See Research Grade Evaluation Guide for details
- The table below shows the point values assigned to each level of the 4 factors Choose for each (level A (lowest) to E (highest) in the VA form 5-4670. Must meet the factor level fully to be credited. If it only meets partially than the next lowest factor level must be credited.

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 |

Practices for Organizing review

- For Research Scientist positions, the levels for **Factors 1 and 4** tend to be the separation point between GS 13, GS 14 and GS 15
- For Factor 1: RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT
 - **Review:** Letters from the VA, Letters of support, Research statement and 2 publications.
 - **On the 4670 Review form,** assign a score and comment on: qualities of the researcher, originality of research and inherent difficulty of research.

Practices for Organizing review -2

- For Factor 2: Supervisory controls:
 - **Review:** Letters from the VA, CV and history of funding and publications
 - **On the 4670 Review form,** assign a score and comment on the independence of the Researcher (i.e. how free are they to design the course of investigations, etc.)
- For Factor 3: Guidelines and Originality
 - **Review:** Research statement and 2 publications.
 - **On the 4670 Review form,** assign a score and comment on: the availability of relevant literature and guidelines in the field and how much independent creation, synthesis, evaluation, judgment, resourcefulness is required for the research.

Practices for Organizing review -3

- For Factor 4: CONTRIBUTIONS, IMPACT, AND STATURE
 - **Review:** Letters from the VA, letters of support, CV and history of funding and publications
 - **On the 4670 Review form**, assign a score and comment on:
 - Impact nominee has had to their research area
 - Publications and impact of Publications
 - History of funding
 - Teaching and mentoring
 - Service to affiliate and/or VA (if established at VA)
 - Include an overall evaluation statement (1-2 sentences)

Each Factor Level in-depth

(With excerpts from the Research Grade
Evaluation guide)

Factor 1 – Research Assignment

Look at: Research Statement, CV, reprints, and Factor 1 of PD

Consider:

- 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- Supervision Received

Look at: CV for history of independence, Factor 2 of PD

Primary Considerations –consider the following:

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

At highest factor levels, the researcher is the one responsible for:

- 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

Factor 3- Guidelines and Originality

Look in: Research Statement, CV, Reprints, Factor 3 of PD

- 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.

Consider the following for the PI's current research:

- 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.

In assessing the impact of creativity, look for:

- 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- Scientific Contributions & Stature

Look in: Funding history, Letters of support, CV, Factor 4 of PD

- **Contributions.** Look at research overall and the number of and quality of research publications, patents
- **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
- **Stature.** Look for:
 - Invitations to speak or chair sessions at national or international scientific meetings.
 - Membership on national scientific advisory, merit review committees,
 - Membership on editorial boards of scientific or professional journals.
 - Recognition by peers as a leader in the nominee's field of research (i.e. letters from national and international experts)
 - Active role or record of training junior scientists and teaching at the VA medical facility or the academic affiliate.
 - Local and national committee service to VA and at affiliate

Reminders:

- Reviewers must not be conflicted
 - i.e.: Supervisors (such as the ACOS for research), subordinates, collaborators, family members or close personal relations, etc.
- Please **sign and return** the evaluation form
- Keep all materials and discussions confidential
- Evaluate packets on their own merits (i.e. do not compare to other submissions)

Links to guides:

- VHA Program Guide 1200.03:
<https://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/ProgramGuide-1200-03.pdf>
- OPM's Research Grade Evaluation guide
<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gsresch.pdf>