



# VA OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

## Centralized Positions Overview and tips for Position Descriptions

Ricardo Gonzalez

Carol Fowler, PhD

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# 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/>

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/occupationalhandbook.pdf>

# 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**

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

# Common Title 38 Job series for Researchers

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

• 0180 Psychologist	• 0185 - Social Worker
• 0630 – Dietetics & Nutrition Series	• 0631 - Occupational Therapist
• 0663- Physical Therapist	• 0665 – Speech/Language Pathologist
• 0665 - Audiologist	• 0858 – Biomedical Engineer
• 0667 - Orthotist-Prosthetist	

Reference:

[https://www.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub\\_ID=1146&FType=2](https://www.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=1146&FType=2)

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** (Please Read Instructions on the Back)

1. Agency Position No. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Reason for Submission  
 Redescription  New  Hdgtrs  Field  
 Reestablishment  Other

3. Service  
 Hdqtrs  Field

4. Employing Office Location \_\_\_\_\_

5. Duty Station \_\_\_\_\_

6. OPM Certification No. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Fair Labor Standards Act  
 Exempt  Nonexempt

8. Financial Statements Required  
 Executive Personnel Financial Disclosure  Employment and Financial Interest

9. Subject to IA Action  
 Yes  No

10. Position Status  
 Competitive  
 Excepted (Specify in Remarks) \_\_\_\_\_  
 SES (Gen.)  SES (CR)

11. Position Is  
 Supervisory  Managerial  Neither

12. Sensitivity  
 1-Non-Sensitive  2-Noncritical Sensitive  3-Critical  4-Special Sensitive

13. Competitive Level Code \_\_\_\_\_

14. Agency Use \_\_\_\_\_

15. Classified/Graded by \_\_\_\_\_

16. Organizational Title of Position (if different from official title) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Name of Employee (if vacant, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

18. Department, Agency, or Establishment \_\_\_\_\_

19. Employee Review-This is an accurate description of the major duties and responsibilities of my position.

20. Supervisory Certification. I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of this position and its organizational relationship, and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.

21. Classification/Job Grading Certification. I certify that this position has been classified/graded as required by Title 5, U.S. Code in conformance with standards published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or, if no published standards apply directly, consistently with the most applicable published standards.

22. Position Classification Standards Used in Classifying/Grading Position

23. Position Review

24. Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

25. Description of Major Duties and Responsibilities (See Attached)



# 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

# Position Description Format

- 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%

# Position Description Format

- 4. Research Factors (Use 4 factor format)
- See the OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG) for complete standards for each factor:
  - <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gresch.pdf>
  - Factor 1- Research Assignment
  - Factor 2- Supervisory Controls (or Supervision Received)
  - Factor 3- Guidelines and Originality
  - Factor 4- Contributions, Impact, and Stature



# 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

**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

# Position Description Format

## 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.

# 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 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

# Position Description Format

## 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.

# 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 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



# Position Description Format

## 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

## HR Section- Local Panel

- 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

# HR section – 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

## 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.

# HR Section – ORG chart

## 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](mailto: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.

# Timelines (continued)

## SUBMISSION AND REVIEW FOR RR&D:

Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis to:  
[rrdreviews@va.gov](mailto: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](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):  
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/functional-guides/gsresch.pdf>

# Contacts:

HSR&D:

Robert Small; E-mail: [robert.small@va.gov](mailto:robert.small@va.gov)

BLR&D/CSR&D:

Carol Fowler, Ph.D.; E-mail: [carol.fowler@va.gov](mailto:carol.fowler@va.gov)

RR&D:

Ricardo Gonzalez; E-mail: [ricardo.gonzalez@va.gov](mailto:ricardo.gonzalez@va.gov)

# Questions?

To learn more about VA research:  
[www.research.va.gov](http://www.research.va.gov)