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Policies and Procedures

Title: ARS Research Associate Program

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This P&P contains practical information about the ARS Research Associate Program. It describes the process and identifies responsibilities. Minor changes have been incorporated to reflect an increase in funding level for HQ Funded Research Associate Positions and change Exhibit 1 to reflect additional NATO countries.

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Introduction

Maintaining the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) research competence depends upon a continual infusion and updating of scientific expertise into the Agency's food and agricultural research system. The ARS Research Associate Program is one important mechanism to achieve these goals. At its inception in 1987, the objectives of the Research Associate Program were to supplement the research of the lead scientist and other career scientists on Current Research Information System (CRIS) projects and to provide temporary employment opportunities for recent recipients of the doctoral degree to perform research while receiving advanced training through association with the Agency's permanent staff. These original objectives are still valid. Additionally, the Research Associate Program has come to be recognized as an important outreach mechanism to identify and create a diverse, multidisciplinary pool of scientist candidates for potential permanent career appointments in ARS.

It is the intent of the Research Associate Program to fill positions on a **temporary** basis for work on a specific project to solve specific problems. It may not be used as an alternative to filling permanent positions. However, Research Associates are encouraged to consider and compete for permanent career scientist positions in ARS that are advertised for recruitment.

Authority

The Research Associate Program appointments in the Department of Agriculture are in the Excepted Service under Schedule B 213.3213(b)(1) for:

- Temporary positions of professional research scientists at GS-15 grade level or below, in ARS and the Forest Service (FS).
- Positions filled by persons having a doctoral degree in an appropriate field of study for research activities of mutual interest to appointees and the Agency.
- An initial period not to exceed 2 years with an extension up to an additional 2 years. Extensions beyond 4 years, up to a maximum of 2 additional years, may be granted, but only in **very rare and unusual** circumstances.

1. Research Associate Program Components

The Research Associate Program has three components:

- **Postdoctoral Research Associate**--Supplements a scientist's education while providing expertise. Headquarters funded appointments are made at the GS-11/12 grade levels.

Locally funded appointments may be made at the GS-15 grade level and below. Funding of postdoctoral research associate positions may be provided by the local Management Unit (MU), by the ARS Administrator, or both. Positions must be classified in accordance with the Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG). Proposed allocation above the GS-12 level require peer panel review in accordance with P&P 431.3-ARS.

- **Visiting Scientist Research Associate**--Sabbatical assignments of university, State, or agricultural industry scientists with Ph.D. degrees. Appointments are made at the GS-15 and below grade levels. Funding must be available at the local level. Positions must be classified in accordance with the RGEG. Proposed allocation above the GS-12 level require peer panel review in accordance with P&P 431.3-ARS.
- **Research Affiliate**--Professional scientists with Ph.D. degrees performing limited research projects on problems selected by senior scientists in direct support of the mission of the research unit. Funding must be available at the local level. Appointments are made at the GS-7/9 grade levels and are classified via application of appropriate position classification standards rather than the RGEG (see Exhibits 2 and 3).

This component provides some flexibility to research units that may be experiencing insufficiency of funds to support a GS-11 position for a postdoctoral research associate or visiting scientist research associate, and in cases where non-ARS scientists are not permitted to accept a GS-11 salary. Such salary limitations are sometimes placed on visiting foreign scientists. MUs should be aware of potential problems that may arise from the pay inequity when research affiliates and visiting scientist research associates work in the same unit. Both positions have the same qualification requirements, i.e., a Ph.D. degree. Appointees may question the grade and pay disparity between the research affiliate, GS-7/9 and the postdoctoral research associate, GS-11/12. It is important to ensure that GS-7/9 research affiliates are performing limited assignments reflective of their position description.

2. **Postdoctoral Research Associate--Headquarters Funded Funding**

The source of the funding for postdoctoral research associates, i.e., Headquarters or locally funded, will determine the requirements and procedures to follow.

Funding **from Headquarters** is for 2 full years at \$50,000 per year for one postdoctoral research associate under the same principal investigator (PI). The T.W. Edminster Research Associate Award, for the single best proposal overall, bestows \$60,000 per year for 2 years. **Location and/or Area** funds must provide for any additional or supplemental resources needed.

Research Proposals

Research proposals for Headquarters funding are solicited from scientists each summer by the Administrator through Area Directors (ADs). The proposal must be submitted by an individual ARS permanent scientist (Category 1 or 4) and submitted to the Area Office via the Agricultural Research Information System (ARIS). The proposal can contribute to a team effort, but mentorship and supervision must be provided by an individual ARS scientist.

A proposal may not be submitted by a temporary research scientist or a permanent scientist during a Performance Improvement Period.

The research proposal should be a specific, narrow piece of research supportive of a component of a CRIS project and achievable in 2 years. Specific instructions are issued each spring when it is time to begin the process of selecting proposals for Headquarters funding. The proposal must show the National Program, or Program component, it is related to and should succinctly explain such areas as the research problem; research objective, approach, and goal; expected results and potential impact of the completed research; and other relevant information.

Research Proposal Selection Process

The research proposal selection process involves:

- The Administrator
- Area Directors
- National Program Staff (NPS)

The ADs and NPS have a shared responsibility in program balance, priorities, relevance, and excellence. ADs have the primary responsibility for daily management, whereas NPS has responsibility for longer term priorities and allocation of resources. To identify the best proposals to receive funding, the proposals are evaluated by the ADs and the National Program Leadership Team separately, but concurrently. Their evaluations are then combined for a final score to determine which proposals are funded.

Any modification to a proposal, once approved for funding by the Administrator, must be cleared through the Deputy Administrator, NPS.

The Administrator's Responsibilities:

- Approve proposals to be funded based on recommendations from NPS and ADs.
- Select proposal to receive the T.W. Edminster Research Associate Award.
- Notify ADs of the proposals approved for funding.

Area Directors' Responsibilities:

- Review and rank the research proposals submitted by scientists competing for Headquarters funding in accordance with established criteria. The criteria to be used are announced when the annual request for submission of proposals is made.
- Forward approved proposals to NPS via ARIS.

National Program Staff Responsibilities:

- Review and rank the proposals in accordance with established criteria.
- Combine the scores with the ADs' scores and resolve any differences.
- Present the proposals being recommended for funding to the Administrator.

Procedures after Proposal Approval

The Area Director's Responsibilities:

- Notify Principal Investigators (PIs) that their proposal has been approved for funding.
- Notify submitting scientists that their proposal has not been approved for funding.

The Principal Investigator's Responsibilities:

- Assure new approved positions are annotated in the MU's Annual Resource Management Planning System (ARMPS) documents.
- Recruit at professional meetings and other sources. (See **Outreach and Candidate Selection** below.)
- Prepare and send a copy of proposed advertisements to the Human Resources Division (HRD) servicing specialist. The specialist must review and approve the contents of **all** advertisements before they are published.
- If more than one application is received, review applications to determine if any of the candidates may be entitled to veterans' preference. Refer questions on veterans' preference to the HRD servicing specialist.
- Submit selectee's application materials, OF-306, original transcript, SF-52, AD-332 and position description to their HRD servicing specialist.

Human Resources Division Responsibilities:

The HRD servicing specialist will:

- provide information to applicants and program officials to facilitate the recruitment process;
- classify the position through application of the RGEG; and
- review and approve advertisements submitted by the PI.
- notify the HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator when postdoctoral research associates have been filled so that advertisements can be promptly deleted from the HRD Web site. For Headquarters funded positions, notification is to include name of the selectee and entrance-on-duty date for entry into the ARIS system.

The HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator will:

- solicit information from the PI in order to publish Headquarters funded positions on the HRD Web site.
- provide information to program officials and the HRD servicing specialists to facilitate the recruitment process.

3. Postdoctoral Research Associate--Locally Funded

Most positions are identified in the ARMPS documents for approval by the Administrator prior to recruitment. Positions not identified in the ARMPS documents and funded through other means, e.g., new grant monies, may be approved by the AD.

The Area Director's Responsibilities:

- Approve positions not identified during the ARMPS process.

The Principal Investigator's Responsibilities:

- Assure new position information is annotated in the MU's ARMPS documents.
- Proceed with recruitment of approved positions. (See **Outreach and Candidate Selection** below.)

Human Resources Division Responsibilities:

The HRD servicing specialist will:

- assist in the recruitment process including approving advertisements;
- answer questions on the application of veterans' preference;
- classify the position through application of the RGEG; and
- notify the HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator when postdoctoral research associate positions have been filled so advertisements can be promptly deleted from the HRD Web site.

The HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator will:

- publish a consolidated list of postdoctoral research associate positions at the GS-11/12 grade levels on the HRD Web site. Publication on the HRD Web site is recommended for locally funded positions but is not required.

4. Outreach and Candidate Selection

Outreach

It is the desire of ARS to have a workforce that reflects the diverse groups that comprise the population of the United States. In support of this, an outreach effort has been designed to eliminate underrepresentation of minorities by attracting scientists from those groups of the population that the Agency has determined are underrepresented in the workforce. Based on workforce statistics, these groups are Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Outreach efforts must be conducted in a manner which promotes increases in employment levels of scientists from the most underrepresented groups while not engaging in any preferential treatment to an individual or inequitable treatment of any group. When conducting outreach efforts:

- all Headquarters funded postdoctoral research associate vacancies will be advertised on the HRD Web site;
- scientists receiving one of the Headquarters funded postdoctoral research associate positions should publicize the position at sources of known qualified candidates, both minority and nonminority;

- all qualified applicants will be given full consideration and veterans' preference laws apply; and
- selection will be made from the best qualified applicants.

Selecting a Candidate

Selectees for Headquarters funded positions must have received a Ph.D. within the last 4 years. Area Directors have the authority to approve exceptions to this recency of degree policy. There is no restriction for recency of the Ph.D. for locally funded positions.

In the event the principal investigator that was awarded a Headquarters funded position leaves the agency prior to filling the position, the funding for that position is forfeited.

Selecting officials have 18 months in which to make a hiring decision for a Headquarters funded position. The deadline date will be announced when the announcement of the selected proposals is made. The countdown ends upon the selection of a candidate or 18 months from the beginning of the countdown, whichever occurs first. The deadline date is for making a selection of a candidate, not a deadline for having the selectee on the rolls. The entrance-on-duty date should be within 2-3 months of selection.

In **very rare and unusual** circumstances, exceptions to the 18-month limitation for recruiting and making a selection may be requested in writing to the AD. Upon concurrence, the AD will forward the request to the Deputy Administrator, NPS, for approval in order to avoid loss of the funding.

When a postdoctoral research associate leaves a Headquarters funded position prior to the exhaustion of the provided funds, the remaining funds are forfeited. If a postdoctoral research associate leaves after funds have been received by the location, all unused funds **must** be transferred back to Headquarters. A request to refill a vacated position must be sent through the AD to the Deputy Administrator, NPS. However, approval to refill a vacated position is granted in **very rare** cases.

Procedures to Follow after Selecting a Candidate

National Program Staff Responsibilities (Headquarters Funded ONLY):

- Reviews requests for funds transfer. If approved, forwards to Budget and Program Management Staff for release of funds. If not approved, as requested, discusses request with the submitting PI to resolve the problem.

The Principal Investigator's Responsibilities:

- Makes a “tentative” selection and notifies the HRD servicing specialist of selection decision. The selection is considered “tentative” until HRD has reviewed the candidate’s application materials, OF-306 and original transcript. Proof of the Ph.D. degree is required.
- Prepares the SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, and includes or attaches:

For Postdoctoral Research Associate: the Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332), and the position description. The SF-52 should state in Remarks: Research Associate Program--Funded by Headquarters or Locally Funded.

For Visiting Scientist Research Associate: the Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332), and the position description. The SF-52 should state in Remarks: Schedule B appointment of a Visiting Scientist Research Associate.

For Research Affiliate: the Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332), and prototype position description (see Exhibits 2 and 3). Use of these position descriptions is **mandatory**. Complete the information as indicated in the prototype description. The SF-52 should state in Remarks: Schedule B appointment of a Research Affiliate.

- Submits the above forms and the candidate’s application through established channels to HRD.
- With concurrence from HRD, establishes the entrance-on-duty date.
- For Headquarters funded positions, requests transfer of funds (or an adjustment to an original funds transfer) through ARIS no earlier than 2 weeks after the entrance on duty of the research associate. Include the name of the postdoctoral research associate, class year, e.g., Class of 2004, date entered on duty, name of ARS scientist who submitted the approved proposal, in what proportion the funding is requested, i.e., how much for which fiscal year(s), and the balance of funds remaining after deduction of the funds requested.

Human Resources Division Responsibilities:

The HRD servicing specialist will:

- classify the position;
- ensure candidate has completed all degree requirements (may be documented with letter from school official, if diploma is unavailable), has completed all required forms, and if not a U.S. citizen, possesses a permanent resident card (green card) I-551, or appropriate visa;

- determine grade level of selectee for the GS-12 and below. (Grade level determinations for GS-13 and above are made by ad hoc or scheduled panels);
- make an official written offer of employment to the candidate;
- process the action to bring the selectee on the rolls; and
- notify the HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator of **all** selections for Headquarters funded positions and of locally funded positions that were advertised on the HRD Web site.

The HRD Research Associate Program Coordinator will:

- input selection information into ARIS after verification with data in the National Finance Center Payroll and Personnel System. (Headquarters Funded ONLY)

Budget and Program Management Staff Responsibilities:

- Release approved funds to appropriate project number. (Headquarters Funded ONLY)

5. Research Associate Program Appointments

Appointments to any of the components of the Research Associate Program:

- are in the Excepted Service under Schedule B 213.3213(b)(1);
- are restricted to citizens of the United States, countries with which the U.S. has a defense treaty, or countries which the U.S. Congress has exempted from the restricting legislation (See Exhibit 1);
- may be made for up to 2 years. If Headquarters funded, the appointment may not be for less than 2 years. (Appointments made for 1 year or less do not convey eligibility for some benefits);
- may be extended for up to 2 more years. Requests for extensions beyond the initial 2 years may be approved by a GS-9 and above HRD servicing specialist. The written request must clearly state the reasons an extension is believed necessary, and be routed through the Area Office for the review and concurrence of the AD before it reaches HRD;
- may be made to more than one position provided **total time under all appointments** in any/all components of the Research Associate Program in ARS and FS does not exceed 4 years; and

- in **rare and unusual circumstances**, may be extended for an additional 2 years for a total of 6 years. Requests for extensions beyond the 4 years must be approved by the HRD GS-13 team leader servicing the geographical location of the MU. The written request must clearly state the reasons an extension is required and certify that funding is available. The request must be routed through the Area Office for the review and concurrence of the AD before it reaches HRD.

6. Employee Benefits

Leave. Appointees to any component (i.e., postdoctoral research associate, visiting scientist research associate, and research affiliate) of the Research Associate Program assigned to a regularly scheduled tour of duty are eligible to earn and use sick and annual leave as long as the appointment is for more than 90 days.

Appointments of More than 1 Year

Within Grade Increases. Appointees to any component of the Research Associate Program on an initial appointment for more than 1 year are eligible for within grade increases after meeting the required waiting period.

Health, Life, and Long Term Care Insurance; Retirement; and Thrift Savings Plan. Appointees to any component of the Research Associate Program are eligible for the following, if their initial appointment is for more than 1 year:

- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program.
- Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.
- Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS).
- Thrift Savings Plan.
- Long Term Care Insurance.

Appointments of 1 Year or Less

Appointments of 1 year or less do not convey eligibility in the life, health, or retirement programs. These "temporary" employees are covered by the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA).

If an employee's appointment is extended beyond the initial 1 year or less, the employee becomes eligible for coverage under FEHB. However, an employee electing coverage after the initial appointment of 1 year or less must pay the **entire** cost of the premiums as there is no government contribution.

Extension of an appointment of 1 year or less beyond the first year **does not** convey eligibility for FEGLI, FERS, or within grade increases.

Other coverage. All appointees to any component of the Research Associate Program are covered by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act for work injury and Federal Tort Claims Act.

7. Summary of Responsibilities

Administrator

- Approve proposals for Headquarters funding.
- Select proposal to receive the T.W. Edminster Research Associate Award.
- Notify ADs of approvals and selection.

Area Director

- Review and rank proposals; forward to NPS.
- Notify PI of approved proposals.
- Notify submitting scientists of proposals not approved.
- Approve locally funded positions not identified during the ARMPS process.

National Program Staff

- Review and rank proposals; combine scores; resolve differences.
- Present proposals for funding to the Administrator.
- Review requests for funds transfers, forward to Budget and Program Management Staff.

Principal Investigator

- Prepare proposal.
- Assure position information is in ARMPS documents.
- Recruit from diverse sources.
- Obtain HRD approval for advertisements.
- Make tentative selection and entrance-on-duty date.
- Prepare and submit SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, with required attachments.
- Request funds transfer for approved proposals no earlier than two weeks after entrance on duty of selectee.

Human Resources Division

HRD Servicing Specialist:

- Assist in the recruitment process and advertise positions in various media.
- Review/approve advertisements submitted by PIs.
- Provide information to applicants and program officials.
- Classify the position.
- Determine eligibility of selectee.
- Make official offers of employment, including the entrance-on-duty letter.
- Confirm selections prior to NPS releasing funds.
- Process action to bring selectee on board.
- Notify Research Associate Program Coordinator when selections are made.

Research Associate Program Coordinator:

- Solicit information from PI and publish announcements of Headquarters funded positions.
- Provide information to applicants and program officials.
- Input selections of Headquarters funded research associates into ARIS.
- Maintain records, prepare reports, and respond to inquiries.

Budget and Program Management Staff

- Release funds.

9. Glossary

AD-332. Position Description Cover Sheet.

ARIS. Agricultural Research Information System.

ARMPS. Annual Resource Management Planning System.

BPMS. Budget and Program Management Staff.

CRIS. Current Research Information System.

HRD. Human Resources Division.

MU. Management Unit.

NPS. National Program Staff.

PI. Principal Investigator.

SF-52. Request for Personnel Action.

EDWARD B. KNIPLING
Acting Administrator
Agricultural Research Service

Attachments:

Exhibit 1

Exhibit 2

Exhibit 3

Exhibit 1

Citizenship Information

Positions in the excepted service including ARS postdoctoral research associate positions may be filled either by (1) a citizen or national of the United States; (2) a citizen of a country the U.S. Congress has specifically exempted from the restricting legislation in the annual Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Act; or (3) a national of a country currently allied with the United States in the current defense effort. Detailed information on Federal employment of noncitizens is available at: http://www.opm.gov/employ/html/non_cit.htm

The U.S. Congress has specifically exempted the following from the appropriations act restrictions:

- Persons who owe permanent allegiance to the United States (for example, natives of American Samoa and Swains Island);
- Aliens from Cuba, Poland, South Vietnam, or countries of the former Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan) lawfully admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence (have a “green card”);
- South Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees paroled into the U.S. after 1/1/75;
- Nationals of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) who qualify under the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992 (as reflected by Code EC6 as the first three characters on the reverse of their Permanent Resident Card);
- Citizens of Ireland, Israel, or the Republic of the Philippines

Also exempt from the appropriations act ban are nationals of countries currently allied with the United States in a defense effort, (as determined by the Office of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, 202 647-1345). Listing of countries as of July 1, 2004.

Argentina	Cuba	Haiti	Netherlands	Slovak Republic
Australia	Czech Rep.	Honduras	New Zealand	Slovenia
Bahamas	Denmark	Hungary	Nicaragua	Spain
Belgium	Dominican Rep.	Iceland	Norway	Thailand
Bolivia	Ecuador	Italy	Panama	Tobago
Brazil	El Salvador	Japan	Paraguay	Trinidad
Bulgaria	Estonia	Korea (Rep. of)	Peru	Turkey
Canada	France	Latvia	Philippines	United Kingdom*
Chile	Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Uruguay
Colombia	Greece	Luxembourg	Portugal	Venezuela
Costa Rica	Guatemala	Mexico	Romania	

* Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Northern Ireland.

Additional Note: Immigration law bans employment of noncitizens unless lawfully admitted for permanent residence or are otherwise authorized to be employed.

Exhibit 2

Prototype Position Description - Research Affiliate, GS-7

A. **INTRODUCTION:**

This position is located in _____ Research [Institute or Laboratory], at [City], [State]. The mission of the unit is to conduct research on _____. The purpose of this position is to complete projects of limited scope and complexity in support of broader research assigned to senior scientists in the unit.

B. **DUTIES:**

Conducts limited research projects in the area of _____. Plans and carries out individual experiments within prescribed approaches. Selects the appropriate methods and procedures and/or devises and recommends alternative methods of standardized analysis to solve problems. Performs the analyses and tests using such instruments as _____. Prepares manuscripts reporting findings from experiments conducted.

C. **EVALUATION FACTORS:**

1. **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION:**

Professional knowledge of principles, theories, and practices in the field of _____, knowledge of methods and procedures, and a skill in calibrating and operating basic analytical instruments sufficient to perform relatively routine and limited analyses and tests by applying established methods and procedures.

2. **SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:**

The supervisor assigns projects with instructions on the problem to be studied, the approach desired, and the general techniques to be applied.

Incumbent completes assignments and prepares analyses of findings, including manuscripts.

The work is reviewed for adherence to stated assignment, for technical soundness of the results, and to ensure work is performed in line with the laboratory's overall mission. Manuscripts receive careful review within the unit before being submitted for peer review.

3. **GUIDELINES:**

The methods and procedures for performing the work are established. Specific guidelines such as established methodology, manuals, precedents, and standard operating procedures are available for reference.

Incumbent must exercise judgment to select the appropriate methods and procedures to carry out the analyses and tests. Situations in which the guides do not apply are referred, typically with a recommended action, to the supervisor or a higher level researcher.

4. **COMPLEXITY:**

The assignments involve a variety of limited research tasks.

Judgment and some initiative are applied in planning simple details of the work as in deciding how to collect and present data; in determining from established guide material, the methods and techniques to use; in making simple adaptations of methods and techniques; and in recognizing circumstances requiring special attention.
5. **SCOPE AND EFFECT:**

Incumbent performs work of limited scope and complexity, involving a variety of assignments which are completed using standard methods. The work affects the accuracy and reliability of the supervisor's broader projects.
6. **PERSONAL CONTACTS:**

The personal contacts are primarily with other scientists and technicians within the unit.
7. **PURPOSE OF CONTACTS:**

The personal contacts are to receive advice and assistance and to report the progress and results of the work.
8. **PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**

The work involves prolonged standing.
9. **WORK ENVIRONMENT:**

The work involves regular and recurring exposure to chemical, radiological, and/or biological agents. Special safety precautions are required and incumbent uses protective clothing and gear such as a laboratory coat, gloves, and safety glasses. The incumbent must adhere to current facility security policies and procedures.

Exhibit 3

Prototype Position Description - Research Affiliate, GS-9

A. **INTRODUCTION:**

This position is located in _____ Research [Institute or Laboratory], at [City], [State]. The mission of the unit is to conduct research on _____. The purpose of this position is to perform research projects which directly contribute to the unit mission.

B. **DUTIES:**

Conducts research projects in the area of _____. Plans and carries out individual experiments within prescribed approaches. Devises and recommends alternative methods of standardized analysis to solve problems. Prepares manuscripts reporting findings from experiments conducted, including initial interpretation of significance to the overall project. Performs tests and analyses by applying established analytical methods and procedures or by operating an automated analytical system according to established operating procedures. Devises, recommends and, with the supervisor's approval, modifies methods that are needed to obtain the information requested.

C. **EVALUATION FACTORS:**

1. **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION:**

A professional knowledge of principles, theories, and practices of _____, a knowledge of methods and procedures, and skill in calibrating and operating analytical instruments sufficient to independently solve problems which can be solved by application of standard practices and independently perform a variety of established analyses and tests of various substances.

Skill in independently selecting and applying precedents and established methods and practices to solve problems susceptible to standard practices.

Skill in making method modifications.

2. **SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:**

The supervisor assigns the work by defining the overall objective, priorities, and deadlines and gives suggestions on unprecedented problems or factors in the assignment.

Incumbent is expected to independently plan and carry out each assignment, handling problems encountered in accordance with previous training and accepted practices.

Completed work is reviewed for technical soundness and conformance with the assignment's requirements.

3. **GUIDELINES:**

In general, precedents are available in the form of previous studies on related subjects, standard methods in textbooks, handbooks, and other literature, and possibly, from manuals or procedure.

These guides do not always specifically apply to the work. Therefore, the incumbent must use judgment to evaluate, select, and adapt the established guidelines to specific requirements and problems in the work, and analyze results to ensure that the changes are valid.

4. **COMPLEXITY:**

Research studies may be complex but are characterized by clear and specific objectives, investigation of a limited number of variables, and self-directed work in planning and carrying out experiments in accordance with approaches which have been structured by others.

Problems encountered can usually be solved by minor modification of the established methods and procedures.

5. **SCOPE AND EFFECT:**

Incumbent performs varied phases of research of limited complexity within a plan structured by senior unit scientists. The results of the work affect the scientific adequacy and accuracy of unit research projects.

6. **PERSONAL CONTACTS:**

The personal contacts are with scientists and technicians in the immediate unit and other laboratories.

7. **PURPOSE OF CONTACTS:**

The personal contacts are to discuss methodological problems and possible solutions, to obtain information, and to report the progress and results of the work.

8. **PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**

The work requires prolonged standing.

9. **WORK ENVIRONMENT:**

The work involves regular and recurring exposure to chemical, radiological and/or biological agents. Special safety precautions are required and incumbent uses protective clothing and gear. The incumbent must adhere to facility security policies and procedures.