



**OP 56.09: RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ASSOCIATES FOR  
THE DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND VETERINARY MEDICINE  
AND THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH**

**PURPOSE**

A comprehensive university requires a cadre of personnel who are able to devote full time to research and extension. The purpose of this document is to establish a consistent set of titles for such positions and to establish promotion criteria and approval process as it relates to HRM 60-323 for the positions. Existing procedures are to be used for establishing positions, advertising vacancies, and filling positions. Affirmative action regulations apply to these positions, except that there are no advertising requirements for the Postdoctoral Associate.

**POLICY**

All regulations of Mississippi State University concerning employment and promotion must adhere to the By-Laws and Policies of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (1970, with subsequent amendments). Every person employed by the University is expected to meet high standards of professional integrity, collegiality and objectivity, and to further the goals of his/her unit(s) and the University. In addition, a person of research/extension rank must have an appropriate degree, or its equivalent in training and experience; a strong commitment to higher education, and in particular to the mission of Mississippi State University; and a willingness to assume the responsibilities and obligations appropriate to a professional university employee.

**Position Titles**

Four levels of appointment are to be used for professional (support/service) positions:

1. Research/Extension Associate I
2. Research/Extension Associate II
3. Research/Extension Associate III
4. Senior Research/Extension Associate

Personnel appointed to these positions should: (a) be involved in research/extension support; (b) hold either a bachelor's or a master's degree in the appropriate discipline and (c) meet specific criteria developed by the organizational unit where the person is located.

**General Criteria for Appointment to Research/Extension Positions**

Criteria for appointment/hiring, promotion and retention of Research/Extension Associates outlined in this policy are the same regardless of fund source.

1. Beginning with a bachelor's degree:

- a. A professional employee with a bachelor's degree and demonstrated competence can begin work at the Research/Extension Associate I level.
  - b. To begin at the Research/Extension Associate II level, one must have a bachelor's degree and a minimum of 3 years of relevant experience and the equivalent of a master's degree.
  - c. To begin at the Research/Extension Associate III level, one must have a bachelor's degree and a minimum of 6 years of relevant experience and the equivalent of a master's degree.
2. Beginning with a master's degree:
- a. A professional employee with a master's degree and a minimum of 1 year of relevant experience and demonstrated competency can begin work at the Research/Extension Associate II level.
  - b. To begin at the Research/Extension Associate III level, one must have a master's degree and a minimum of 3 years of experience.
  - c. To begin at the Senior Research/Extension Associate level, one must have a master's degree and a minimum of 6 years of experience.
3. Beginning with a doctoral degree:
- a. A professional employee with a doctoral degree with 2 years of relevant experience and demonstrated competence can begin work at the Research/Extension Associate III level.
  - b. To begin at the Senior Research/Extension Associate level, one must have a doctoral degree and a minimum of 3 years of relevant experience.

### **Suggested Performance Standards of Professional Activities**

In every case, the performance of research/extension personnel will be judged by all parties involved in promotion decisions on the basis of written policy statements or criteria (i.e., specific requirements) developed by the specific units with which the individual is associated. All criteria should be based on the application of the highest professional standards associated with the university work. Some suggested items to consider in establishing evaluative criteria at the unit level follow.

### **Annual Evaluation and Review of Research/Extension Associates**

Supervisors of Research/Extension Associates are required to annually evaluate employee performance. Annual performance evaluations should provide Research/Extension Associates with insight regarding progress towards promotion. On an annual basis, each department head or appropriate officer and each of his/her employees in research/extension positions will agree in writing to the employee's objectives, responsibilities, and expectations. This written agreement must be consistent with the promotion criteria for research/extension positions of the department,

specific unit and the University. This agreement will be reviewed by the next appropriate administrator, and a copy placed in the employee's promotion file. If the department head and employee cannot reach an agreement, the matter will be referred to the next appropriate administrator.

An annual performance review, based on the predetermined agreement, will be conducted by the department head or appropriate officer and each research/extension employee in his/her department before the budget is made for the next year or when specified by the central administration of the University, whichever occurs first. A copy of this review, signed by both parties, will be reviewed by the next appropriate administrator and placed in the employee's promotion file. The employee may attach a dissenting statement to all copies of this review.

A permanent, confidential file for each research/extension employee is to be maintained by the department head or appropriate officer. No record in the file is to be added, changed, or withdrawn without the knowledge of both parties. The responsible administrative officer will make all pertinent information available to the appropriate individuals when the employee is a candidate for promotion, or when the information is needed in an appeals or grievance case.

### **Guidelines for Promotion of Research/Extension Associates**

It is desirable for the University's Research/Extension Associates to advance professionally. The purpose of these guidelines is to describe promotion criteria for each of the Research/Extension Associate levels to qualify for advancement to the next level. Performance is defined and evaluated in an individual's annual evaluation as outlined in University Operating Policies and Procedures 13.24: <https://www.policies.msstate.edu/policy/1324>

The promotion of Research/Extension Associates will be initiated by a letter from the employee to the supervisor along with an Application for Promotion, Research Engineers, Research Associates and Research Scientists (<http://www.hrm.msstate.edu/forms/> for Research Division or <http://www.dafvm.msstate.edu/resources/forms/index.html> for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine) and supporting documentation as appropriate. The application must be approved by signature through the employee's supervisor, Department Head, Dean/Director, and the Vice President for Research and Economic Development or the Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine or both when there is a joint appointment.

In every case, the performance of research/extension personnel will be judged by all parties involved in promotion decisions on the basis of written policy statements or criteria (i.e., specific requirements) developed by the specific units with which the individual is associated. All criteria should be based on the application of the highest professional standards associated with the university work. Some suggested items to consider in establishing evaluative criteria at the unit level follow.

Denial of the promotion application must be documented with rationale for said denial in a letter to the employee. The employee would then have the right to appeal the denial to the next higher administrator outside the department level by specifically addressing the items listed in the denial letter.

## Performance Standards for Promotion of Research/Extension Associates

The University recognizes achievement of Research/Extension Associates by advancement. Promotion is never granted routinely for simple satisfactory accomplishment. Rank also reflects comparable stature with others in similar disciplines in other university settings. Promotion is based on performance and demonstrated competence and not solely on length of service, but a reasonable time must elapse for the individual to demonstrate competence and have it confirmed through periodic evaluation. Professional achievement elsewhere will be considered for promotion.

Evaluation criteria within DAFVM and ORED are listed in Table 1. Criteria are based upon levels of independence/leadership, creative contribution/scientific endeavor, and professional development/activities.

*Table 1. Evaluation/criteria for promotion of Research/Extension Associates within the DAFVM and ORED.*

	Research/Extension Associate Promotion Level		
	I to II	II to III	III to Sr.
Minimum Years of Employment at Previous Level	3 years	3 years	3 years
Minimum Educational Requirement	M.S. or Equivalent *	M.S. or Equivalent *	M.S.
Performance** Standards	Excellence in 1 area with satisfactory in at least one additional area	Excellence in 2 areas	Excellence in 2 areas with satisfactory in at least one additional area
Annual Evaluation***	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations	Average overall rating of 3.0 or higher on each of the last three annual evaluations

\* Items which may be used to demonstrate equivalency include, but are not limited to: a second bachelor's degree, professional certifications, continuing education units (CEU's) earned, advanced training/workshops completed, graduate courses completed, current progress toward an M.S. degree, and related work experience.

\*\* Performance for DAFVM Research and Extension Associates is defined in Section VII, Accomplishments A - D (Scholarly Activities, Oral Presentations, Impact and Outcome Measures and Grants, Contracts and Resources related to Program Mission) [of the DAFVM Application for Promotion](#), and for Research Associates in the [Division of Research – Application for Promotion, Research Engineers, Research Associates and Research Scientists](#).

\*\*\* Documented in the [DAFVM Annual Evaluation Form](#) and the [ORED Annual Evaluation Forms](#).

## **Responsibilities for Supervisors of Research/Extension Associates**

Supervisors of Research/Extension Associates are responsible for providing a working environment that allows the employee to function as a professional member of the University and achieve orderly growth in professional stature and rank. Specific responsibilities of supervisors include:

1. Conduct an annual performance appraisal based on job-related criteria and submit on the appropriate form [www.hrm.msstate.edu/](http://www.hrm.msstate.edu/).
2. Submit a “Progress Toward Promotion” form, in addition to the “Annual Performance Appraisal” form [www.hrm.msstate.edu/](http://www.hrm.msstate.edu/).
3. Assist Associates in collecting and preparing documents for “Applications for Promotion”.
4. Provide opportunities for professional development and achievement.
5. Acknowledge the intellectual contributions of Associates by including them as coauthors of research and extension publications, when appropriate.
6. Supervisors should involve Associates in classroom/workshop instruction, presentations to professional groups, outreach and technical assistance activities and the writing and administration of grants consistent with source of funds and time and effort reporting.
7. Incorporate potential salary adjustments in development of extramural budgets, since Research/Extension Associates are often extramurally funded.

## **Compensation for Educational Achievement or Promotion**

The University grants an increase in annual salary, subject to the availability of funds, to employees who become certified by a recognized and accredited certification program, or who earn an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. This certification or degree must be in an academic discipline that is relevant and related to the employee's current position and should enhance the employee's ability to perform the duties of that position. If the completion of certification or degree is a condition of employment, employees are ineligible for additional compensation. Please see: [www.hrm.msstate.edu/compensation/policies/educ/](http://www.hrm.msstate.edu/compensation/policies/educ/).

Recommended compensation increments are:

Research/Extension Associate I to II = \$3,000

Research/Extension Associate II to III = \$3,500

Research/Extension Associate III to Senior = \$4,000

## **Schedule for Promotion Decisions**

Departmental recommendations may be submitted to the appropriate dean, director and then to the appropriate vice president(s) anytime of the year. The vice president(s) will evaluate the

recommendations of the dean/director based on applicant satisfying the criteria, as set forth.

A letter requesting an appropriate salary increase must accompany the promotion packet. The letters should include the current salary and proposed post promotion salary. Signature approval for salary increases should follow guidelines in HRM's Staff Compensation Program ([HRM 60.323](#)).

### **REVIEW**

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every four years or as needed by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Vice President for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine or when revisions are made to HRM 60.323 with recommendations for revisions presented to the President. Input may be provided to the Vice Presidents by Human Resources Management.

**REVIEWED BY:**

/s/ Julie Jordan 4/19/2023  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development Date

/s/ Keith Coble 4/7/2023  
Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Date

/s/ Leslie Corey 4/19/2023  
Chief Human Resources Officer Date

/s/ Tracey Baham 5/9/2023  
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness Date

/s/ Joan Lucas 5/11/2023  
General Counsel Date

**APPROVED:**

/s/ Mark E. Keenum 7/24/2023  
President Date