



## **OP 56.08: PROMOTION IN RANK AND TITLE OF COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS**

### **PURPOSE:**

A comprehensive university requires a cadre of personnel who are able to devote full time to teaching, research and Extension. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent set of titles for Extension Agents and to establish promotion criteria for the positions. Existing procedures are to be used for establishing positions, advertising vacancies, and filling positions. Affirmative action regulations apply to these positions.

### **POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Mississippi State University Extension Service to provide and maintain a system of promotion in rank for County Extension Agents. Promotion is never granted routinely for simple satisfactory service, but reflects progressively higher professional competencies and accomplishments. Promotion is based on performance and demonstrated competencies and not on length of service, but a reasonable time must elapse for the individual to demonstrate competency and have it confirmed by periodic evaluation. Reference the *Extension Agent Career Advancement Guidelines* (ES 5 - A) posted on the Mississippi State University Extension Service intranet for complete details. The system should encourage Agents to participate in career track promotions and be recognized and compensated for their achievements.

### **Ranks:**

*Extension Agent I-* An entry-level Agent, who meets the requirements for employment with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, has the potential for successful performance in Extension work, and whose record indicates a potential for further academic work.

*Extension Agent II-* An agent who meets the criteria for Extension Agent I and has earned a master's degree; has the potential for successful professional growth; demonstrates evidence of an ability to plan, organize, develop, implement and evaluate successful educational programs and services; and demonstrates qualities of leadership, drive and initiative. Must have a minimum of three (3) years of service as an Agent I.

*Extension Agent III-* An agent who meets the criteria for Extension Agent II, possesses a master's degree, and has consistently demonstrated innovative, creative and progressive performance beyond the satisfactory level and continues to demonstrate professional growth. Must have a minimum of five (5) years of service as an Agent II.

*Extension Agent IV-* An agent who meets the criteria for Extension Agent III, possesses a master's degree, and consistently demonstrates excellence in performance and service to colleagues, clientele, and community. Must have a minimum of six (6) years of service as an Agent III.

## **PROCEDURE:**

*NOTE: At any stage in the process detailed below, the Agent may withdraw their dossier without penalty.*

- Agent seeking promotion submits *Intent to Apply for Promotion* form to Regional Extension Coordinator (REC) for verification eligibility requirements and signature by July 1. Agent also submits three (3) to five (5) names of Extension professionals outside of Mississippi State University to potentially serve as external reviewers.
- REC verifies Agent's eligibility for promotion and notifies the Agent and Program & Staff Development (PSD) Specialist by July 15.
- Agent submits completed application packet (dossier) to their REC by August 15. The required documentation to be included in the dossier is available at <https://intranet.extension.msstate.edu/node/867>
- REC reviews the dossier and identifies strengths/weaknesses. The REC discusses their review with the Agent for determination on continuing with the promotion process. The Agent may make changes to the dossier at this time.
- If the Agent elects to continue, the REC scans and saves an electronic (PDF) version of the submitted dossier.
- The REC forwards the electronic dossier to selected external reviewers (not required to be from the list submitted by the Agent) and solicits letters of recommendation, due to the REC by October 1. A minimum of three (3) letters are required.
- The REC adds all external letters of recommendation received to the Agent's dossier. The REC writes a letter of recommendation (for or against, with justification) and adds it to the appendices of the Agent's dossier. The REC notifies the Agent of current promotion potential status and offers the agent the option to continue or withdraw the dossier. If the Agent elects to continue, the REC forwards the dossier to the Research & Extension Center Head (R&E Head) by October 15.
- The R&E Head reviews the Agent's dossier, writes a letter of recommendation (for or against, with justification), and adds it to the appendices of the dossier. The R&E Head notifies the Agent of current promotion potential status and offers the agent the option to continue or withdraw the dossier. If the Agent elects to continue, the dossier is forwarded to the Extension Director's office by October 31.
- The Extension Director and PSD Specialist convene a State Peer Review Committee by November 15. The PSD Specialist electronically distributes the Agent's dossier to the peer review committee members via Qualtrics. Access to the dossier is password-protected, and peer reviewers must electronically sign a confidentiality statement before proceeding.
- The State Peer Review Committee members individually review the electronic dossier. They then meet, deliberate, and come to consensus on a final recommendation. The committee chair writes a letter of recommendation (for or against, with justification) and adds it to the appendices of the dossier. The chair notifies the Agent of current promotion potential status and offers the agent the option to continue or withdraw the dossier. If the Agent elects to continue, the dossier is forwarded to the Extension Director's office by December 1.

- The Extension Director consults with the Associate Extension Directors for review of the Agent's dossier and all recommendation letters. The Extension Director writes a letter of recommendation (for or against, with justification) and adds it to the appendices of the dossier. The Extension Director notifies the Agent of current promotion potential status and offers the agent the option to continue or withdraw the dossier. If the Agent elects to continue, the dossier is forwarded to the Vice President by January 15.
- The Vice President makes a recommendation to the President by February 15.
- Agent is notified of the final decision regarding promotion by March 15. Appeals concerning denial of promotion must be filed with the Extension Director within 10 working days of the notification.
- The letters of recommendation from the external reviewers, REC, R&E Head, and State Peer Review Committee are removed from the dossier, and the dossier is returned to the Agent.
- Promotion decision becomes effective July 1.

### **STATE PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The role of the State Peer Review Committee is to review colleagues' submitted promotion dossiers, assess each dossier for strengths/weaknesses, and submit a recommendation which provides input for the Extension Director regarding the promotion of Agents according to the established criteria. The State Peer Review Committee:

- Assists in the execution of the promotion process.
- Keeps confidential all information and deliberations concerning promotion.
- Thoroughly reviews all candidate dossiers in order to adequately discuss qualifications and accomplishments in relationship to the established criteria.
- Is responsible for upholding the standards as presented in the *Extension Agent Career Advancement Guidelines*.
- Makes a recommendation for each candidate.

The State Peer Review Committee must consist of five (5) full-time Agents, with at least three (3) Agents at a rank of IV. The remaining two (2) committee members may be either an Agent III or IV.

- Each REC selects one (1) Agent from their region to serve on the Committee.
- The Extension Director appoints a chair at large from abroad. The chair is a voting member.
- Committee members, including the chair, serve no more than three (3) consecutive years. They are eligible to serve again after three (3) years.
- Agent IIIs review and make recommendations only on dossiers submitted by Agents with a rank of I or II. Agent IVs review and make recommendations on all submitted dossiers.
- Other than with the exception stated above, all committee members review all submitted packets, regardless of primary program area.

### **REVIEW:**

This operating policy will be reviewed every four years, or as needed, by the Director of the Mississippi State University Extension Service and Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.

**REVIEWED BY:**

/s/ Gary B. Jackson  
Director, Extension Service

12/12/2018  
Date

/s/ Gregory A. Bohach  
Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and  
Veterinary Medicine

12/17/2018  
Date

/s/ Timothy N. Chamblee  
Assistant Vice President and Director  
Institutional Research & Effectiveness

01/10/2019  
Date

/s/ Joan Lucas  
General Counsel

01/14/2019  
Date

**APPROVED:**

/s/ Mark Keenum  
President

01/24/2019  
Date