

MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Program Group
Research Unit Directors
Research Associate Deans

FROM: Arthur Lupia, Vice President for Research and Innovation 

DATE: June 22, 2026

SUBJECT: Promotion Casebooks for Research Scientist Track Faculty, 2026-2027 Promotion Cycle

This memorandum summarizes the procedures that need to be followed for promotion recommendations for individuals appointed to the Research Scientist (RS) track. The RS track includes individuals holding the following ranks: Research Investigator¹, Assistant Research Scientist, Associate Research Scientist, and Research Scientist.

The University of Michigan Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) is responsible for oversight and administration of promotions for the RS track faculty. All promotions to the ranks of Associate Research Scientist and Research Scientist must be reviewed and approved by the Vice President for Research and Innovation (VPRI). As a reminder, Schools and Colleges on the Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint campuses, along with the Life Sciences Institute and the Institute for Social Research, have the authority delegated to them by the VPRI to make appointments and promotions to the Assistant Research Scientist rank. Units that report to OVPR should submit their promotion recommendations for Associate Research Scientist and Research Scientist ranks through OVPR for review and approval by the VPRI.

Please ensure the promotion review process for Research Scientists is thorough, equitable, and timely. Refer to the checklist for specific dossier requirements. Incomplete dossiers cannot be accepted.

OVPR considers RS promotions just once a year (as is true for all faculty appointments). This ensures that a common frame of reference is used in making these decisions and enables OVPR to review the total research faculty promotional pattern within the University. Accordingly, recommendations for all RS track promotions, the effective date of which would be **September 1, 2027**, are due:

Deadline: February 10, 2027

As a general guideline, please keep in mind that putting the proper effort into preparing the promotions casebook is crucial to this process. This includes establishing a promotions Review Committee to review each candidate. The Committee membership should include peers at an equal or higher rank than the proposed rank for the candidate and should have at least one member from outside the department or unit.

Disruptions to Scholarly Activity

We acknowledge that many faculty on our campus have experienced new disruptions to their scholarly activity since January 2025, including disruptions in grant reviews, funding announcements, and research activity. Again, we ask that you instruct faculty evaluators in your unit to assess casebooks holistically with appropriate flexibility and that you address such impact in your dean's cover memo as may be appropriate.

Extension Requests Due to COVID-19

We recognize that there may still be some delays attributable to research disruptions that occurred due to COVID-19. For these situations, units may elect to postpone the promotion cycle for one year. This should be done in consultation with the candidate and should not be viewed as automatic. Rather, units should look at the circumstances and determine whether productivity was sufficiently impacted to grant an extension. Such extensions need not be approved by OVPR, but notification must be provided.

Service Requirements

¹ Entry level position appointed directly by the individual school, colleges, Dearborn, LSI and ISR. There is no promotional path to this rank.

Please note that while there is no service requirement for appointment to Assistant Research Scientist, **there is** a service requirement for promotion to the ranks of Associate Research Scientist (“some internal service required”) and Research Scientist (“significant internal service and some external service required”).

Updates to requirements for External Review Letters

The requirement for external arm’s length reviewers for Research Scientists has been revised. The new requirement is as follows:

A minimum of five letters must be included, with at least two of those being from external reviewers (with up to three letters from internal reviewers). **External letters do not need to be from arm’s length reviewers.** While arm’s length is not required, their inclusion would strengthen the case.

Updates to the appointment & promotion criteria for Research Scientist Track

Associate Research Scientist (ARS)

OVPR Criteria

Scholarship

- Strong local and growing national scholarly reputation on the basis of research productivity and contributions over several years, possibly as part of a larger research program
- ~~Record of peer-reviewed publications~~ **Scholarly contributions that serve to advance the field and/or strengthen the scientific community**
- ~~Participation in relevant academic or professional meetings~~

Independence

- Independence not required or planned for, but would strengthen the case
- Plan for supporting role

Implementation of Criteria

Scholarship

- Performance: Productive over several years, possibly as part of a large program
- Peer-reviewed Publications: Growing record **of peer-reviewed** publications: although majority of contribution may be part of large author teams, demonstration of leading the output, writing of some scholarly work expected as typically measured as lead author on some publications
- Academic/Professional Community:
 - Participation **in relevant academic or professional meetings; leadership/service to academic or professional societies, or**
 - **Activities contributing to advancing the field (e.g., peer review, editorial positions, etc.)**
- Reputation: Strong local and growing **regional or national**
- Impact (Scientific, policy, or public): Some

Independence

- Intellectual: Developing
- Funding: Evidence of proposal efforts as Co-I

Research Scientist (RS)

OVPR Criteria

Scholarship

- Strong **regional**, national and/or international scholarly reputation on the basis of sustained research productivity and contributions
- Substantial record of peer-reviewed publications
- Significant, sustained participation in **scholarly activities that serve to advance the field and/or strengthen the scientific community** ~~relevant academic or professional meetings~~

Independence

- Independence not required or planned for, but would strengthen the case
- Significant and sustained participation on research projects in a team science role
- ~~A Record of independent scholarship/scientific contributions, and/or~~
- ~~Significant scientific managerial responsibilities such as supervision and mentorship of other research faculty~~

Implementation of Criteria

Scholarship

- Performance: Sustained productivity and contributions
- Peer-reviewed Publications: Substantial record, *although majority of contribution may be part of a larger author team*
- Academic/Professional Community:
 - Significant and sustained participation in relevant academic or professional meetings; leadership/service to academic or professional societies, or
 - Activities contributing to advancing the field (e.g., peer review, editorial positions, etc.)
- Reputation: Strong regional, national and/or international
- Impact: Significant

Independence

- Intellectual:
 - Strong evidence of scholarly contributions (see appendix 1)
 - ~~Evidence of substantial supervisory role over defined area, e.g., Core Director~~
- Funding:
 - Evidence of proposal and awards as Co-I
 - Evidence of success with external funding as PI or Co-PI/MPI or substantive Co-I role with fiscal responsibility (may be modest size award, including modest size foundation, industry and other small external funds or Site PI / Co-I w scientific and fiscal responsibility for a core or clearly-delineated scientific aim) *not required, but would strengthen the case*

Please note that all RS casebooks are to be submitted electronically following OVPR instructions.

OVPR will complete the review of all RS promotion dossiers and will notify Deans and Departments of the decisions no later than **May 21, 2027**. It is the Dean's/Director's responsibility to contact individual faculty regarding a negative decision for promotion.

Please forward this memorandum and the attached casebook checklist to Department Chairs, Program Heads, or others in your unit who are directly responsible for the promotional review of Research Scientists. These materials are also available electronically at:

<https://research.umich.edu/research-resources/research-faculty-affairs/>

Please contact OVPR at ovpr.faculty.affairs@umich.edu with any questions about the promotion process.

Cc: Sara Blair
Christopher Friese
Lisa Prosser
Patricia Smith

Attachments

Appendices

Appendix 1: Recognition of Scholarly Activities for Research Scientists

The University recognizes the vital role that Research Scientists play in advancing our research mission. When evaluating performance for annual review, promotion, and reappointment, it is important to acknowledge the broad range of scholarly activities that extend beyond conventional research products (e.g., publications, grants, and conference presentations).

Research Scientist faculty contribute to the academic and research community through diverse forms of engagement and leadership. These activities strengthen the University, help to advance their fields of study, and are related in some way to the faculty member's research (i.e., contributing to "reputation"). Below are **Suggested Scholarly Contributions** that should be considered when evaluating Research Track faculty (this is not an exhaustive list and we anticipate additions to this list as this change in the promotion criteria is implemented)*

- Conference peer review
- Organizing a panel/workshop – local, regional, national
- Invited panel presenter
- Leadership role in a professional society
- Mentorship of trainees (esp outside the immediate lab setting)
- Journal peer review
- Editorial position
- National committee
- Community engagement (e.g., research translation)
- Policy contributions
- Study section/ grant peer review
- Guideline committees, advisory boards
- Leading data training and dissemination

Service activities that do not represent scholarly contributions:

- Serving on a promotion committee
- Serving on a space committee

Activities like these both strengthen the University's research enterprise and our scientific communities, and should be considered as meaningful components of evaluation for Research Scientist faculty, both in annual reviews and in promotion considerations.

Appendix 2: The Grid: *Research Scientist Track Faculty Promotion Criteria*

				Research Track Faculty Promotion Criteria		
Performance area			Research Investigator (RI)	Research Scientist Track		
				Assistant Research Scientist (aRS)	Associate Research Scientist (ARS)	Research Scientist (RS)
Scholarship	OVR Criteria		Entry Position - Doctoral, MD, PhD or equivalent	- Potential for scholarly development, possibly as part of a larger research program - Record of peer-reviewed publications - Participation in relevant academic or professional meetings	- Strong local and growing national scholarly reputation on the basis of research productivity and contributions over several years, possibly as part of a larger research program - Scholarly contributions that serve to advance the field and/or strengthen the scientific community	- Strong regional, national and/or international scholarly reputation on the basis of sustained research productivity and contributions - Substantial record of peer-reviewed publications - Significant, sustained participation in scholarly activities that serve to advance the field and/or strengthen the scientific community
	Implementation of Criteria	Performance		Potential, possibly as part of a large program	Productive over several years, possibly as part of a large program	Sustained productivity and contributions
		Peer-reviewed Publications		Some, as a result of PhD or postdoctoral training	Growing Record of peer-reviewed publications: although majority of contribution may be part of large author teams, demonstration of leading the output, writing of some scholarly work expected as typically measured as lead author on some publications	Substantial record, although majority of contribution may be part of a larger author team
		Academic / Professional Community		Participation	- Participation in relevant academic or professional meetings; leadership/service to academic or professional societies, or - Activities contributing to advancing the field (e.g., peer review, editorial positions, etc.)	- Significant and sustained participation in relevant academic or professional meetings; leadership/service to academic or professional societies, or - Activities contributing to advancing the field (e.g., peer review, editorial positions, etc.)
		Reputation		Potential	Strong local and growing regional or national	Strong regional, national and/or international
		Impact (scientific, policy or public)		None	Some	Significant
Independence	OVR Criteria			- Independence not required or planned for - Plan for supporting role	- Independence not required or planned for, but would strengthen the case - Plan for supporting role	- Independence not required or planned for, but would strengthen the case - Significant and sustained participation on research projects in a team science role
	Implementation of Criteria	Intellectual		None, but may be developing	Developing	Strong evidence of scholarly contributions (see attached memo)
		Funding		None required	Evidence of proposal efforts as Co-I	- Evidence of proposal and awards as Co-I - Evidence of success with external funding as PI or Co-PI/MPI or substantive Co-I role with fiscal responsibility (may be modest size award, including modest size foundation, industry and other small external funds or Site PI / Co-I w scientific and fiscal responsibility for a core or clearly-delineated scientific aim) not required, but would strengthen the case

Performance area			Research Investigator (RI)	Research Scientist Track		
				Assistant Research Scientist (aRS)	Associate Research Scientist (ARS)	Research Scientist (RS)
Teaching	OVPR CRITERIA	• No formal requirement for teaching	• No formal requirement for teaching	• No formal requirement for teaching	• No formal requirement for teaching	• No formal requirement for teaching
	Implementation of criteria	Non-didactic		• None required	• None required	• Participation in student/trainee/learner mentoring
		Didactic		• None required	• None required	• None required
Service	Internal		• No formal requirement	• No formal requirement	• Some	• Significant
	External		• None	• None	• No formal requirement	• Expected / Some
Time in Rank Policy			• OVPR does not approve but must be notified • Maximum time in rank, 4 years • Movement to aRS or RaP at School/ College level	• OVPR does not approve but must be notified of new appointments or promotion to aRS • Maximum time in rank, 6 years (time in rank extension requests permitted) • During 6th year of appointment, unit must complete a full review and submit to OVPR for approval. As a result of this review: -Candidate may be promoted to: ARS, RaP, RAP as appropriate -Candidate may be transitioned to staff position or terminated	N/A	N/A

*Units that report to OVPR must submit recommendations for promotions to the respective Associate Vice President for Research for promotions to the ranks of Assistant Research Scientist or higher