

MIDWEST AREA  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES  
MANUAL

**RPES - RESEARCH  
POSITION EVALUATION  
SYSTEM**

Created by:  
Program Administrative Support Task Group  
Updated September 2004

**Revised Case Writeup Format CHECKLIST**

(Caution: No entry at variance with prescribed format will be accepted. Factors I-IV: (convert to PDF Format/CD)

- \_\_\_ ARS-514 Cover Sheet [form dated 3/04] (Paper copy - Original with signatures)
- \_\_\_ ARS-332 Position Description form (Paper copy - Original with signatures)
- \_\_\_ ARS-570 Indepth Reviewer Contact Sheet [form dated 2/98] (Convert to PDF format/CD)

**Factor I - Research Assignment** (*Factors I-III = official position description; must not exceed three (3) single-spaced pages in length*).

- \_\_\_ A. Assigned Responsibility - **Identify the specific NP(s) under which the research is conducted.** Example: "Research is a component of ARS National Program 202--Soil Resource Management," or more than one NP, "in support of ARS National Programs 106--Aquaculture, and 108--Food Safety."
- \_\_\_ B. Research Objectives and Methodology
- \_\_\_ C. Expected Results
- \_\_\_ D. Knowledge Required (limited to "brief" list of specific-applicable disciplines/skills needed in **current** assignment).
- \_\_\_ E. Supervisory Responsibilities (title & grade of ARS employees; nature of supervision given [technical/administrative]); **EEO statement from P&P**

**Factor II - Supervision Received** (gender-neutral terms)

- \_\_\_ A. Assigned Authority
- \_\_\_ B. Technical Guidance Received
- \_\_\_ C. Review of Results
- \_\_\_ D. General Supervision

**Factor III - Guidelines and Originality** (gender-neutral terms)

- \_\_\_ A. Available Literature
- \_\_\_ B. Originality Required

**BEGIN NEW PAGE - IIIC** (Brief paragraph)

- \_\_\_ C. Demonstrated Originality (Brief paragraph **NOT TO EXCEED ½ page**; describe the originality and creativity demonstrated related to **current** assignment. Do not restate details of accomplishments described under Factor IV.

**Factor IV - Qualifications and Contributions** (Optional opening career summary paragraph limited to ⅓ page and must not repeat information from demonstrated originality).

- A. **Demonstrated Accomplishments - Accomplishments:** 3> for GS-11 and below; 5> for GS-12; 8> for GS-13 and above. Must not exceed ½ page. **Max. number of 2 exhibits per accomplishment (MUST HAVE EXHIBITS).** May combine support letters (limit 3) as 1 exhibit **ONLY** with cover memo from Area Dir.; RL's can use leadership letters from cooperators, administrators, NPLs.

**Subheadings: Accomplishment / Role / Impact. See attached Guide for further information.**

**\*\* Additional Accomplishments: Limited to no more than 2 entries in paragraph format; (no tables). ½ page in length; no exhibits permitted. \*\* Label exhibits on CD: Exhibit 1a #26.pdf \*\***

**B. Stature, Recognition and Impact** {Bullet Format}

- \_\_\_ 1. Honors and Awards (no more than 20 most significant) (NO performance awards/Certificates of Merit).
- \_\_\_ 2. Special Invitations (no more than 20 most significant)
- \_\_\_ 3. Offices & Committee Assignments Held in Professional & Honorary Societies (no more than 20)
- \_\_\_ 4. Participation in Professional Meetings, Technical Conferences, Workshops, etc. (List each society; state years of membership; total number of meetings attended at all echelons; total number of presentations - No presentation titles need be shown. See Guide attached).

**C. Advisory and Consultant Activities** {Bullet Format}

- \_\_\_ 1. Professional Advisory & Consulting Activities (no more than 20 most significant)
- \_\_\_ 2. Special Assignments (no more than 20 most significant)

**D. Other**

- \_\_\_ 1. Educational Background (only Degrees - no additional)
- \_\_\_ 2. Research Experience
- \_\_\_ 3. Other Significant Information (Max. of 10 significant items; do not exceed ⅓ page. List materials actually submitted for review but not yet accepted; **NO material in other stages of preparation.** State total number of funded grants, CRADAs, & coop agreements covering the career followed by bullet list of 20 most significant. Don't list proposals). {Bullet Format}

**E. Publications** (Start NEW Page) (See P&P attached - subdivide into 2 sections)

- \_\_\_ 1. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications (research published following standards for anonymous peer review prior to publication). Multi-authors: **bold** SY name and *italicize* graduate students, postdocs, visiting SYs. Need line denoting since hire/last promotion.
- \_\_\_ 2. Other Publications (all other work not meeting definition above). **\*\*Inclusion of abstracts list no longer permitted.**



<b>Research Position Evaluation Case Writeup (Cover Sheet)</b>	Name of Employee	Date
	Title	Series and Grade
	Organization	Peer Group (Alpha Code)
Supervisor	Title	

**Privacy Act Notification**

**General**

This information is provided pursuant to the Privacy Act for individuals supplying information for inclusion in a system of records. Section 5107, Title 5, United States Code, authorizes agencies to place positions in the appropriate grade and series in conformance with standards published by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Research Grade- Evaluation Guide (RGEG) published by OPM in accordance with Section 5105, Title 5, provides guidance/criteria for evaluation of research positions. Providing information for Factor IV is voluntary, but essential to the classification process.

**Purposes and Uses**

Factor IV collects information needed to provide a Research Position Evaluation Panel with essential incumbent facts to evaluate the position against RGEG criteria. This information may be disclosed to appropriate officials/employees of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA Office of Human Resources Management, and OPM, involved in the research position classification process. These data may also be used to aid decisions on placement of research scientists within ARS.

**Effects of Nondisclosure**

Because Factor IV of the case writeup contains information which the panel uses to classify your position, providing complete and specific information for each element of the factor is in your best interest. Omission of an item may result in a lower score than otherwise appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Employee's Signature                      Date**



Clearance

I have reviewed this case writeup and find it to be accurate, complete and in the prescribe format.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor's Signature                      Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Area Director's Signature                      Date**

<b>REASON FOR THIS POSITION</b>				<b>POSITION DESCRIPTION COVER SHEET</b>			
1. NEW	2. IDENTICAL ADDITION TO THE ESTABLISHED PD NUMBER	3. REPLACES PD NUMBER					
<b>RECOMMENDED</b>							
4. TITLE				5. PAY PLAN	6. SERIES	7. GRADE	
8. WORKING TITLE				9. INCUMBENT (Optional)			
<b>OFFICIAL</b>							
10. TITLE							
11. PP	12. SERIES	13. FUNC.	14. GRADE	15. DATE	16. I/A		17. CLASSIFIER
				MONTH/DAY/YEAR	YES	NO	
<b>18. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (Agency/Bureau)</b>							
1st				5th			
2nd				6th			
3rd				7th			
4th				8th			
<b>SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION</b>							
I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of the position and its organizational relationships 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 continue violations of such statute or their implementing regulations.							
19. Supervisor's Signature			20. Date		22. Second Level Supervisor's Signature		23. Date
21. Supervisor's Name and Title				24. Second Level Supervisor's Name and Title			
<b>FACTOR EVALUATION SYSTEM</b>							
FACTOR	25. FLD/BMK	26. POINTS	FACTOR	25. FLD/BMK	26. POINTS		
1. Knowledge Required			6. Personal Contacts				
2. Supervisory Controls			7. Purpose of Contacts				
3. Guidelines			8. Physical Demands				
4. Complexity			9. Work Environment				
5. Scope and Effect			<b>27. TOTAL POINTS</b>			27.	
<b>28. GRADE</b>						28.	
<b>CLASSIFICATION CERTIFICATION</b>							
I certify that this position has been classified as required by Title 5, US Code, in conformance with standards published by the OPM or, if no published standard applies directly, consistently with the most applicable published standards.							
29. Signature					30. Date		
31. Name and Title							
32. Remarks					33. OPM Certification Number		

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## Guide to Changes in RPES Case Writeup Format/Content (effective FY 2005)

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Chapter numbers refer to Part I (Case Writeup Preparation) of Manual 431.3-ARS.

### General Guidance (Chapter 2)

- Do not modify, omit, or add section headings or subheadings to the format.
- Each format element must be included in the case writeup.
- If there is nothing to report under an element, enter "None."
  
- Typing Specifications. Case writeups must:
  - be typed single-spaced,
  - be typed with a minimum font size of Times New Roman 12 cpi or equivalent,
  - have minimum of 1" margin on all sides, and,
  - adhere to length specified for individual elements and subelements.

**Caution:** No entry at variance with prescribed format will be accepted. Noncompliant writeups will not be accepted by the Area Office.

[no cover or title page on writeup]

**Note:** Factors I through III-B of the writeup constitute the official position description, and **must not exceed three (3) single-spaced pages** in length. They describe the position's **current** characteristics, i.e., over the next 3-4 years.

### Factor I: Research Assignment (Chapter 3)

- Element A: Assigned Responsibility
  - Identify specific National Program(s) supported
  - If assignment is new, give month and year, i.e., "(since November 2003)"
    - do not use for first review after joining ARS.
  
- Element B: Research Objectives and Methodology [no change]
  
- Element C: Expected Results [no change]
  
- Element D: Knowledge Required
  - Limit to a **brief** list of specific, directly applicable disciplines and skills needed to perform the **current** research assignment.
  
- Element E: Supervisory Responsibilities [no change]

**Factor II: Supervision Received** (Chapter 4) [no change]

- Element A: Assigned Authority
- Element B: Technical Guidance Received
- Element C: Review of Results
- Element D: General Supervision

**Factor III: Guidelines and Originality** (Chapter 5)

- Element A: Available Literature [no change]
- Element B: Originality Required [no change]

**Note:** Start Element III-C on a **new** page

- Element C: Demonstrated Originality
  - A single paragraph not to **exceed ½ page**.
  - Describe originality and creativity considered the best evidence of originality related to the **current** assignment.
  - Some specific accomplishments should be cited, but **do not** restate details of accomplishments described under Factor IV.

**Note:** Needless detail, verbosity, and reiteration of Demonstrated Accomplishments will not strengthen the case.

**Factor IV: Qualification and Contributions** (Chapter 6)

**Note:** Under each subelement, include only **relevant** information and select **limited numbers of entries** considered the most significant over incumbent's entire career.

- Optional opening career summary paragraph
  - Limited to **no more than 1/3 page**
  - **Do not** repeat information from Demonstrated Originality (III-C)
- Element A: Demonstrated Accomplishments
  - Each accomplishment statement **must not exceed ½ page in length**.
  - Must be written using accomplishment/role/impact **subheadings**.
  - **Maximum of 2 exhibits** per accomplishment.
    - **Maximum of 3 supporting statements can be bundled** with AD memo (and thereby counted as a single exhibit).
- Additional Accomplishments
  - Remains optional.
  - Same format as Demonstrated Accomplishments.
  - **Must not exceed ½ page in length**

- Limited to a **maximum of 2 entries**.
  - Must illustrate impact **equal** to that of the Demonstrated Accomplishments.
  - Exhibits not permitted.
- Element B: Stature and Recognition [Note "Impact" deleted from element title]
    - Begin each subelement with a summary sentence citing total numbers in each entry, followed by a bullet listing of no more than the specified number of those considered most significant **from all sources** over the incumbent's career.
      - Alternatively, provide only bullet list if total number doesn't exceed stated maximum.

- 1. Honors and Awards - list not more than the **20** most significant.

Example: "Have received 26 formal honors and awards, of which the following are the most significant:"

**Note:** Do **not** list performance awards, including Certificates of Merit for employee performance recognition.

- 2. Special Invitations - list not more than the **20** most significant.
- 3. Offices and Committee Assignments in Professional and Honorary Societies - list not more than the **20** most significant.
- 4. Participation in Professional Meetings, Technical Conferences, Workshops, etc. List each specific society separately, state years of membership, total number of meetings attended at all echelons, and total number of presentations made; **do not** list presentation titles. Examples:

Entomological Society of America (1992-present). Attended 10 meetings and made 6 presentations.

Soil Science Society of America (1995-2001). Attended 12 meetings and made 7 presentations.

Crop Science Society of America (non-member) (1998-2002). Attended 2 meetings and made 2 presentations.

Environmental Protection Agency Atmospheric Contaminant Workshops (1992-1999). Attended 5 meetings and made 3 presentations.

**Note:** Cite significant *invited* presentations under Special Invitations.

- Element C: Advisory and Consultant Activities

- Begin each subelement with a summary sentence citing total numbers in each entry, followed by a bullet listing of no more than the specified number of those considered most significant **from all sources** over the incumbent's career.
  - Alternatively, provide only bullet list if total number doesn't exceed stated maximum.
- 1. Professional Advisory and Consulting Activities - list not more than the **20** most significant.
- 2. Special Assignments - list not more than the **20** most significant.
- Element D: Other
  - 1. Educational Background [no change]
  - 2. Research Experience [no change]
  - 3. Other Significant Information
    - List a **maximum of 10** significant items pertinent to scientific career not addressed elsewhere in the writeup.
    - **No entry may exceed 1/3 page.**
    - List only materials **actually submitted for journal review but not yet accepted.**
      - Do **not** list materials in other stages of preparation.
    - State total number of funded grants, CRADA's, and cooperative research agreements over the incumbent's career, followed by a bullet listing of **not more than the 20** most significant.
      - Do **not** list proposals.
- Element E: Publications
  - Peer-Reviewed Publications of Original Research
    - List here only original research that has been published following accepted standards for anonymous peer review prior to publication.
  - Other Publications
    - List here all other work not meeting the above definition.
  - Number publications sequentially throughout the list. Do **not** start renumbering under the "Other Publications" heading.
  - For multi-author documents, **bold** incumbent's name and *italicize* the names of graduate students, postdoctoral associates, or visiting scientists supervised.

- For guidance on **electronic publications**, see the definition in P&P 151.1-ARS, Publishing (Print and Electronic).
- Inclusion of abstracts or abstracts list is **not permitted**.

#### **ARS Form 514, Research Position Evaluation Case Writeup (Cover Sheet)**

- Enter scientist's name, title, **present** series and grade, research unit, duty station, immediate supervisor's name and working title, peer group (**use only current alpha code** shown in P&P 431.3-ARS), and date case writeup is signed.
- Employee, immediate supervisor, and AD sign the form; intermediate supervisor(s) may initial.

#### **ARS Form 570, Indepth Reviewer Contact Sheet**

- Designate (by number) which accomplishment(s) from Factor IV-A each contact is knowledgeable about.
- If the contact is a general (multi-accomplishment or career long) contact, enter the word "General" rather than accomplishment number(s).
- **Be sure to include your immediate supervisor.**
- Ensure the telephone number and e-mail address for each contact are **current**.

For **required** submission media and procedures, see "RPES Case Writeup Review, Approval, and Submission Procedures (effective FY 2005)"

(RPE Staff 3/12/04)

## **RPES Case Writeup Review, Approval, and Submission Procedures (effective FY 2005)**

1. Research Position Evaluation (RPE) Staff schedules case for panel review and issues formal notice to Area Office, establishing official Area Office and RPE Staff cutoff dates for final writeup.
2. Area Office notifies scientist and establishes date for submission of draft writeup for preliminary review (NLT 30 calendar days before official cutoff date).
3. Researcher drafts case writeup, adhering to format and content specifications in Manual 431.3-ARS.
4. Research Leader (RL) reviews draft for format adherence, completeness, and accuracy, and returns to researcher for revision.
5. Researcher revises draft and returns to RL, who forwards draft through line management to Area Office.
6. Area Office staff reviews draft for format and administrative compliance, then Area Director (AD) or designee reviews the draft for technical content/accuracy and makes recommendations for improvement or directs changes in event of noncompliance with Manual specifications.

**Note:** Major disagreement over writeup content will be resolved by the AD as provided in P&P 431.3-ARS, Section 8.

7. Area Office returns draft through line management to the RL, who supervises finalization by the researcher.

**Note:** Above steps may be accomplished using any media (hard copy or electronic) the Area Office desires.

8. Incumbent and RL sign ARS-514 certifying completeness and accuracy, RL signs AD-332, then forwards writeup package through line management to AD for approval and signature. Case package submission media are specified in the table below.

(RPE Staff 3/12/04)

### Case Package Submission Media

Document	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARS-514, case writeup cover sheet</li> <li>• AD-332, p.d. cover sheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper</li> <li>• Original signatures required</li> <li>• Not distributed by RPE staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARS-570, IDR Contact Sheet</li> <li>• ARS-229, Special Form-RGEG Factor IV (for SG Panel only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converted to PDF format; on CD</li> <li>• Converted to PDF format; on CD</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors I-IV (body of writeup)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converted to PDF format; on CD</li> </ul>
Type of exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal article/report</li> <li>• Supporting statement</li> <li>• Book</li> <li>• Model on disc</li> <li>• Videotape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDF scanned; on CD</li> <li>• PDF scanned; on CD</li> <li>• Hard copy for IDR; PDF-scanned title page and TOC on CD for other panelists</li> <li>• Disc</li> <li>• Videocassette</li> </ul>

9. Area Office mails final approved case package on CD to RPE Staff for review and distribution. **Place only one case package on each CD.**  
**Note:** It is no longer necessary to mail a separate copy of the publications list to the National Agricultural Library when you submit your case writeup.
  
10. RPE Staff reviews case package for completeness and compliance with Manual specifications; notifies Area Office by e-mail of noncompliant section(s) requiring revision.  
**Note A:** The AA will hold Area Offices strictly accountable for writeup compliance with Manual specifications. **No entry at variance with prescribed format will be accepted. Noncompliant writeups will not be accepted by the Area Office.** Delays due to improper case preparation may cause cutoff dates to be missed and result in panel review being rescheduled.  
  
**Note B:** RPE Staff will track and report quarterly to the AA the number of instances of noncompliant cases from each Area Office.
  
11. RPE Staff consolidates the CD's for each case assigned to a given panel, copies all cases onto a single master CD, duplicates the master, and mails to individual panelists along with any "hard" exhibits (books, videocassettes, etc.).

For information on new case writeup format and content rules, see "Guide to Changes in RPES Case Writeup Format/Content (effective FY 2005)."

REVIEWING CASE WRITEUPS  
(Revised September 2004)

Use the **RPES Review Checklist** to review cases. In the upper right hand corner on the Checklist, write the name of the individual whose case you are reviewing. This way if it gets detached from the rest of the packet, it can be matched up again. Also, on the Checklist, fill in the Scientists Grade under Factor IV.A. Place a checkmark on the line preceding each section of the case as you review.

**References:**

**RPES Home Page** <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/rpes/Policies-FY2005.htm>

**RPES Manual 431.3**

1. Insure that signatures are on applicable forms.
  - Employee should sign ARS-514
  - Supervisor should sign ARS-514, AD-332
2. Center Director's/RL's name and title should be typed on AD-332 as Second Line Supervisor. Example: PETER B. JOHNSEN  
Center Director
3. Contact List (ARS-570) should include one of the Area Directors; Terry Nelsen needs to be listed as of this year.
4. The scientist should use gender neutral (i.e. incumbent) in Factors, I, II, and III. Avoid saying he, she, his, or her.
5. Factor I, A. Assigned Responsibility. Identify the specific NP(s) under which the research is conducted.
6. Factor I, E. Supervisory Responsibilities. The verbiage for this paragraph should be taken verbatim from the Manual; the number and type of employees supervised, which comprises the first sentence, will be unique for each SY. (Title & grade of ARS employees; nature of supervision given [technical/administrative]); EEO statement from P&P.
7. Factor III, C. Demonstrated Originality must start on a new page. The heading, Factor III - Guidelines and Originality should precede subheading C.
8. Under each of the Demonstrated Accomplishments, be sure that the **Accomplishment**, **Role**, and **Impact** are in bold. At the end of each accomplishment, insure the scientist cites Exhibits (maximum of 2 per accomplishment), e.g. (Exhibit 1a, #6; Exhibit 1b, #9; and #24, #28, #42).
9. Additional Accomplishments - (limited to 2 entries; 1/2 page in length; no exhibits allowed; paragraph format-no tables). Include the subheading.

10. Honors and Awards - (no more than 20 most significant - NO performance awards or Certificates of Merit). {Bullet Format}
11. Special Invitations - (no more than 20 most significant). {Bullet Format}
12. Professional Advisory & Consulting Activities - (no more than 20 most significant). {Bullet Format}
13. Cross reference the actual Exhibit with the way it's cited in the Publications list. Check authors, title, journal, page numbers, and year published for accuracy. Make sure that Exhibits are labeled appropriately, e.g. Exhibit 1a, #6 and so on.
14. Publications - PDF scanned; on CD, subdivide into 2 sections; "Peer Reviewed Journal Publications" and "Other Publications".  
**Label files on CD in pdf format: Exhibit 1a #26.pdf.**

**Notes:**

Some things are neither right nor wrong, just insure there is consistency.

Insure Bold Headers, Underscored Subheaders and indentation is uniform throughout.

Use a Times New Roman 12 point font; 1 inch left margin.

Don't let a heading/subheading hang on a page by itself. Hold it together with at least two lines of text. Same applies for paragraphs and publications; don't let one line hang on a page by itself. There should be at least two lines if the paragraph gets separated by a page break.