



Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service
Scientist Professional Advisory Committee



Scientist Category Handbook: Promotion

Last Updated: May 2022

Types of Promotion

There are three types of promotions in the USPHS Commissioned Corps:

1. Permanent Promotion – see CCI 331.01
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCI_331.01.pdf
2. Temporary Promotion – see CCI 332.01
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCI_332.01.pdf
3. Exceptional Proficiency Promotion (EPP) – see CCI 332.01 section 6-8
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCI_332.01.pdf

Upon call to active duty, officers are appointed at a temporary and permanent grade based on their creditable Training and Experience (T&E). Officers are eligible for regular promotion based on the length of time in their current rank (referred to as Time in Grade) and the length of time as an officer in the PHS Commissioned Corps (referred to as Time in Service).

Helpful guidance regarding the promotion process can be found on the CCMIS website:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_process_m.aspx

For a list of the administrative requirements for non-competitive promotion, please see:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_non_competitive_m.aspx

Promotions to grades O-4 and above for Scientist officers (and all Restricted categories) are competitive and are subject to promotion board review. The promotion policy also allows for a special accelerated temporary promotion called Exceptional Proficiency Promotion (EPP). These promotions are highly competitive and allow promotion of an officer who demonstrates truly exceptional capabilities and is performing in an assignment above his/her current grade. For additional information, see CCI 332.01 section 6-8
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCI_332.01.pdf

How to Know if You are Eligible for Promotion

1. Log into the secure area on the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) Officer Secure Area (OSA) via the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Access Management System (AMS) at https://dcp.psc.gov/osa/osa_security_statement.aspx. The Secure Area Dashboard of the Management Information System includes details covering your eligibility date for temporary and permanent grade promotions.
2. Review competitive temporary or permanent promotion eligibility criteria at:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_competitive_eligibility_m.aspx

Benchmarks

In early 2004, the categories of the USPHS were asked to develop “benchmarks” or guidance for evaluating a career officer. These benchmarks were not intended to be a requirement standard for promotion but are often used as a guide. In 2021, CCHQ released a single standardized set of benchmarks for the 2022 Promotion Year for use by all 11 categories. A link to the previous and current benchmarks can be found on the CCMIS website:

https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_category_benchmarks_m.aspx

The benchmarks are used by promotion boards to score officers in each of the four Promotion Precepts:

- Precept I – Performance Rating and Reviewing Official’s Statement (Performance);
- Precept II – Education, training, and professional development;
- Precept III – Career progression and potential;
- Precept IV – Professional Contributions & Service to the PHS Commissioned Corps (Officership);
- Basic readiness is not scored by the promotion boards but is administratively applied by Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ).

All officers should be familiar with the benchmarks and understand that they are periodically updated, and to ensure that they are using the current benchmarks as guidelines to assist in their career guidance and planning!

Promotion To-Do List

Preparing for promotions is a task that each officer should be continuously involved with over their entire PHS career. Consistent attention to your career plan and advanced planning can significantly reduce stress at this critical time in your career. Promotions to the O-4, O-5, and O-6 grades remain extremely competitive. Special attention should be given to several promotion materials that need to be submitted to the appropriate offices by their respective deadlines. Below is a guide of tasks that should be accomplished while preparing for promotion.

- Submit CV and OS to SciPAC Promotion Document Review Team for review by senior officers prior to uploading to eOPF.
<https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/scientist/careerdev-sc.aspx>
- Review Promotion Process Frequently Asked Questions:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_FAQs_m.aspx
- Review the USPHS Benchmarks. This guidance can be found on the CCMIS website at the following link:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_category_benchmarks_m.aspx

- Review of the current year's Promotion Year Checklist. This checklist can be on the CCMIS website at the following link:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_checklist_m.aspx
- Review your electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF). Access to the CCMIS OSA (https://dcp.psc.gov/osa/osa_security_statement.aspx) now requires an active HSPD-12 Access Card such as a Personal Identification Verification (PIV) card or a Common Access Card (CAC). Ensure the below information is updated in your eOPF:
 - The Promotion Information Report (PIR)
 - An updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Continuing Education and Training report is uploaded in your eOPF. Information regarding the format of these documents for Scientist Category Officers is available on the SciPAC website under Resources and Links:
<https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/resources-and-links.aspx>
 - A current Commissioned Officer's Effectiveness Report (COER) is completed on time and is uploaded in your eOPF. Also, ensure that the COERs from the last 5 years, if applicable, are uploaded in your eOPF and listed on your PIR.
 - A current Officer's Statement is completed on time and is uploaded in your eOPF.
 - A current Reviewing Official Statement (ROS) is completed on time and on file. The 2020 COER was updated ([COER Changes](#)), including release of the new COER system ([COER System Webinar](#)), and the refining of COER types, Evaluation Period and COER Type, who can initiate the COER, and having eight separate textboxes for Rater's comments for each of the eight elements ([COER Policy Webinar](#)).
 - The online COER system is used to complete all COERs on or after October 1, 2020. Please contact your agency liaison for the specific timelines associated with this document.
 - All information you want the board to review must be uploaded to your eOPF no later than December 31. Since documents submitted in mid- or late December can take time to appear in an officer's eOPF, it is recommended that you submit your materials as soon as possible.
- It is critical to ensure that Basic Readiness standards are met at all readiness checks. Readiness checks occur on a monthly basis. Readiness is a condition of service and required at all times unless an officer has a waiver approved by Medical Affairs. If you have a medical waiver, please ensure it is reflected in your RDB Self-Service portal. It is each Officer's responsibility to check their Readiness Status. Refer to:
https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_force_readiness_m.aspx

Readiness: Down to Basics Guide

https://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/RedDOG/Forms/Basic_Readiness_Checklist.pdf

How Promotion Boards Work

A promotion board is convened to consider all officers eligible for temporary and permanent promotions within a category. These promotion boards consist of numerous permanent O-6

level officers who, to the extent possible, are representative of the category in terms of agency/program distribution, specialty, race/ethnicity, and gender and contain at least one officer assigned outside of the Washington, D.C. area. There is also a possibility that promotion boards can consist of officers in other categories besides scientist.

Board members are instructed to base their rankings only on information documented in an officer's eOPF. For this reason, officers are reminded to be consistent in updating their eOPF by providing accurate and current information (e.g., annual CV). In their review of officers being considered for promotion, promotion boards are guided by the benchmarks.

Extraneous information works against an officer because the board needs to sift through the officer's eOPF in search of relevant materials, detracting from the ability to focus on other critical elements of the officer's promotion packet. COERs, Officer and Reviewing Official Statements, and a current CV are central to the decision-making process of the boards. Recently an [Officer Promotion Package Verification System \(OPPVS\)](#) was implemented that gives promotion-eligible officers full visibility and control of their promotion packet. Officers now have the ability to verify the documents presented to the promotion board members during promotion boards.

The promotion board combines all information relevant to the precepts to yield an overall assessment of an officer's qualifications for promotion. This assessment results in a rank-ordered list for each grade. The Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) establishes cutoff numbers for each rank-ordered list by considering the number of vacancies in grade to which promotions can be made. Officers above the cutoff line are promoted during the cycle; those below the cutoff line are not promoted. All officers considered for promotion are notified of the results of the promotion review.

Promotion Results

Promotion results are generally released in June or July of each year. Your agency's PHS liaison office may also share the overall promotion results. The results for all categories are posted on the CCMIS website. Officers will receive their promotion board score sheet and a screenshot of their PIR in the confidential section of their eOPF. The promotion board score sheet will include two parts. Part A includes the board scores for the four precepts (Performance; Education, Training & Professional Development; Career Progression; and Officership) and indicates if the officer is recommended for promotion or not recommended. Part B includes comments from the board regarding the officer's strengths as well as suggestions for improvement.

Temporary and permanent promotion results, detailed by category, grade, and officer name, along with promotion statistics, can be found on the following page:

https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_index_m.aspx

What If I Am Not Promoted?

Officers who have not been promoted should consider discussing their results with a senior officer (O-5 or above), potentially contact the SciPAC Chief Professional Officer (CPO) and/or a mentor, or contact the chair of the SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee (<https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/mentoring-SC.aspx>) to be assigned a mentor. The promotion board comments, if any, are useful to officers as they may outline ways to improve performance and to become more competitive for the next promotion cycle. Additionally, officers ranking in the bottom quartile (25%) for temporary promotions are required to undergo counseling with the CPO or a senior leader in the category as designated by the CPO.

Officers may also be referred to the Involuntary Termination Board due to failure of promotion. For additional details see CCI 382.03 Involuntary Termination of Commission, Section 6-3 (I): https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCPM23_7_4.pdf

Officers should also follow the recommendations included on the Promotion Information Website under the tab titled, "Not Promoted? Now What?": https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_not_promoted_m.aspx.