Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer

Research Scientist Classification

Policy and Guidelines

July 2025

NSW GOVERNMENT

Contents

1 Research Scientist Classification Policy and Guidelines

1.1 Purpose

The Research Scientist Classification recognises the importance of scientific research in the public service by providing a career structure for public service employees who mainly conduct and publish original research. The Classification is used to develop and maintain the quality of scientific research and the resulting advice that is made available to the public service.

1.2 Scope

For the purpose of the Classification, scientific research is interpreted broadly. It extends from traditional disciplinary areas – including the natural and physical sciences, statistics and economics – to emerging scientific areas. Methodologically, scientific research ranges from conventional laboratory or field-based experimentation to computer-assisted modelling of entire natural or managed environmental systems.

Any systematic research that is likely to lead to innovative changes and improvements to Government policy, programs and public services falls within the scope of the Classification. This includes research that improves scientific understanding, the use and management of natural resources, education and extension, technology transfers and commercialisation.

It is recognised that disciplinary fields for scientific investigation are always changing. Entry to, and continuation and progression in the Classification are therefore not limited to those engaged in traditional, established fields of science.

The Classification has four levels: Research Scientist, Senior Research Scientist, Principal Research Scientist and Senior Principal Research Scientist. Entry to, and continuation and progression in the Classification are open to all eligible full-time and part-time employees, subject to the committee's assessment. This ensures fair and comparable evaluations of applications across the public service.

1.3 Legislative context

- Crown Employees (Research Scientists) Award (the Award).
- Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries 2024) Award, as varied or renewed from time to time.

1.4 Definitions

- **Research Scientist Classification** – referred to as 'the Classification'
- **Public Service agency** – referred to as 'the agency', as defined in the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013.*
- **Agency head** – matches the definition of 'head' in the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

- **Employee** – a person employed on an ongoing or temporary basis subject to Part 4 of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.
- **NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer** – referred to as 'the NSW Chief Scientist', meaning the person employed in the Public Service as the Chief Scientist and Engineer.
- **Research Scientist** – an employee within the Classification, in accordance with the Award, regardless of their level of appointment within the Classification. Where the term refers to an employee at the specific "*Research Scientist*" level, the term is italicised.
- **Research Scientist Classification Committee** – referred to as 'the Committee', as described in section 2.

1.5 Key considerations

The Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (OCSE) will review these Guidelines in consultation with the Public Service Association of NSW.

2 Research Scientist Classification Committee

2.1 Role

The Committee assesses applications and makes recommendations to the NSW Chief Scientist for approval. In addition to assessing applications to enter or continue or progress along the levels of the Classification, it also evaluates whether employees should regress or cease working under the Classification. The Committee makes these recommendations in accordance with these Guidelines.

2.2 Structure

The NSW Chief Scientist appoints the Committee members and the Chair. The Committee does not convene for the purpose of assessing applications with fewer than three members, and has a maximum of four members, including the Chair. Excluding exceptional circumstances, the Chair conducts all Committee meetings. The NSW Chief Scientist may appoint an additional Committee member if specialist knowledge is required in a particular case.

The Committee Chair is an independent eminent scientist. The NSW Chief Scientist may approve a Committee member to act as Deputy Chair, who deputises for the Chair in their absence.

Committee members have appropriate standing in the scientific community or are otherwise considered by the NSW Chief Scientist to be qualified to consider the merits of applicants. Committee members may be independent or NSW Government employees.

The NSW Chief Scientist is committed to promoting equity and diversity in the government sector workforce, including in relation to gender, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people with disability. In appointing members to the Committee, the NSW Chief Scientist has regard to this commitment and aims for the Committee membership to reflect the diversity of the wider community.

2.3 Nominations

The NSW Chief Scientist may consult with participating agencies, the Committee and other relevant experts, or call for public expressions of interest from suitably qualified, scientifically expert individuals, when appointing the Committee Chair or Committee members.

2.4 Appointment, tenure and removal

Initially, Committee members may be appointed for up to five years. They may be considered for reappointment for further periods of up to five years. The NSW Chief Scientist may appoint a person to the Committee at any time required. The change of membership recognises the need to maintain continuity of the Committee's collective expertise and experience while undertaking an orderly renewal of membership over time. The NSW Chief Scientist may terminate the membership of a Committee member at any time.

2.5 Duties of Committee members

Committee members are required to assess the merit of each application and make a recommendation based on all the evidence. In doing so, Committee members are to:

- apply the criteria relevant to the application
- exercise independent judgement
- rigorously evaluate all sources of evidence relied upon
- accord procedural fairness to applicants
- adhere to these Guidelines
- advise the Chair or NSW Chief Scientist where there is an actual or perceived breach of these duties.

The Committee has the discretion to employ any method required to best assess the merit of an application.

Committee members must endorse the report to the NSW Chief Scientist that contains its recommendations. The NSW Chief Scientist relies on the report to support the decisions made. Where a Committee member or members have a differing opinion to the majority, they may submit a minority report for the NSW Chief Scientist's consideration.

2.5.1 The Committee Chair

The Chair leads the Committee members in conducting the Committee's business, including:

- convening the Committee to review applications or undertake other business
- chairing Committee meetings
- ensuring the business and proceedings of the Committee are conducted in an efficient and effective manner
- inviting applicants, agency representatives, experts in science and other individuals as appropriate to appear before the Committee or to assist the Committee in its deliberations
- representing the Committee as required
- ensuring rigorous and consistent assessment of applications
- exercising a casting vote on split decisions of the Committee.

If the Chair becomes aware of any concern on the part of any Committee member about the operations of the Committee, the Chair advises the NSW Chief Scientist of the situation. The Chair may also recommend an appropriate course of action to deal with that concern.

2.6 Experts and observers

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, may invite a scientist who is an expert in a particular field to help Committee members judge an application. The expert is not a Committee member.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, may also invite any other visitor to sit with the Committee as an observer or to help the Committee members undertake their responsibilities.

An applicant may bring an independent observer from their union, or other observer of their choice, to an interview.

2.7 Conduct of Committee members

Committee members must demonstrate high levels of personal conduct that are consistent with the Ethical Framework outlined in Part 2A of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*. This includes Committee members disclosing any real or reasonably perceived conflicts of interest.

3 Entry to the Classification

The Committee assesses applications for entry using the relevant criteria in these Guidelines. The Committee recommends entry into the Classification where it is satisfied that all criteria for entry have been met. The Committee also recommends the appropriate level within the Classification to appoint an applicant, irrespective of the level requested by the applicant.

Overview of requirements

To enter the Classification, an applicant must:

- be a public service employee
- meet service and academic requirements (section 3.1)
- meet the criteria for entry (section 3)
- make an application for entry (section 8).

3.1 Criteria for entry

3.1.1 Service requirements

To enter the Classification, an employee must have completed 12 months of service in their current role. Undertaking scientific research must form the most significant part of their duties. In special cases, entry may be available to employees who have not been in their current role for 12 months.

The Committee must be satisfied that the employee's current research program is established and can be sustained at the appropriate level to justify entry into the Classification.

3.1.2 Academic requirements

The minimum academic qualification for entry to the Research Scientist Classification is usually a PhD in a scientific or related field relevant to achieving the agency's objectives.

If an applicant does not hold a PhD, they must have a Masters degree by research or an equivalent academic qualification in an appropriate discipline from a recognised university. They must also provide evidence of published research.

3.1.3 Criteria for levels within the Classification

To enter the Classification at any level, an applicant must be able to unequivocally demonstrate a currently active program of research, its related publications and its contribution to the agency's objectives. It is not sufficient for an applicant to demonstrate a willingness or capability to undertake research, a lapsed research career, or a career where management or administrative duties have overtaken research. The following criteria are specific to each level within the Classification.

Research Scientist

The employee must provide evidence of originality in their approach to research and have primary responsibility, usually in consultation with more senior employees, for selecting the most

appropriate line of investigation of a problem. Where appropriate, they must be able to explain and promulgate results within the agency and publish research results in appropriate scientific journals.

Senior Research Scientist

The employee must have considerable research experience, including undertaking research with a degree of independence – under only general direction – and achieving results. There must be evidence of a scientific leadership role that exceeds the efficiency barrier. The employee may also play a significant role in providing the scientific direction for other scientific staff and carry out performance assessments where appropriate.

A Senior Research Scientist is also expected to contribute to broader program planning in their area of expertise and to meet the agency's objectives.

Principal Research Scientist

The employee must have extensive research experience and a record of outstanding achievement in scientific research that has led to a continuing national and/or international reputation. Their contribution is expected to be at an advanced level, both as an individual and, where applicable, as leader of a research group. This contribution to knowledge must be sustained and have resulted in significant influence on a field of science.

The employee usually plays a major role in the scientific direction of other employees and carries out performance assessments where appropriate.

A Principal Research Scientist is expected to make a significant contribution to developing the agency's strategies and to achieving its goals.

Senior Principal Research Scientist

The employee must have expert research experience and a track record of extensive, substantial and consistent publication in peer reviewed journals that are acknowledged to have a high international impact. They are expected to have made an expert-level contribution to research. They are also expected to have provided significant leadership and direction in their field. The employee will be able to identify emerging research and economic issues, and plan and implement research in anticipation of international scientific, economic and/or environmental change. The employee will have a sound understanding of other disciplines to create new research directions/hypotheses that challenge accepted theories and practice.

The employee's research outcomes must also make a significant contribution to commercialisation or provide an economically valuable return to their agency, or evidence-based policy where relevant. The employee is also primarily responsible for attracting research support through direct funding or funding in kind for their agency.

Formal recognition through a significant award (if available) by a relevant international or highly prestigious professional society of peers or the equivalent is one of the pieces of supporting evidence that the Committee would consider. The recognition should be based on the employee's outstanding contribution to, or development of, their discipline.

3.1.4 General scientific research activities

General expectations relating to scientific research activities apply at all levels of the Classification. The extent of each activity varies, depending on the level. General research activities that are expected across all levels include:

- undertaking scientific research involving problems and opportunities that align with the Government's and agency's objectives
- designing, performing and analysing experimental programs or projects, writing literature reviews, and making scientific observations to evaluate hypotheses or generate new knowledge
- providing supervision (including conducting performance assessments where appropriate) and scientific instruction in aspects of research programs, and leading and co-ordinating research activities
- ensuring that new knowledge and research results are known and applied throughout relevant areas of the agency and Government
- critically assessing the relevance of scientific information to agency objectives
- assessing the extent to which scientific research can contribute to solving problems or advancing understanding in a relevant discipline
- conceiving new ideas and selecting the appropriate research methodology to explore them
- evaluating known theoretical and practical research techniques, and developing new techniques where necessary
- collating, analysing, interpreting, evaluating, implementing and disseminating the results of research through publication, both in peer-reviewed scientific literature and through effective reporting and extension to the agency's clients
- ensuring, where appropriate, the development and application of research results and initiating patent action relating to those results.

3.2 Evidence of achievement

3.2.1 Assessing performance

The main criterion for assessing an employee's performance is evidence of past and recent achievements, and the ability to continue pursuing research projects and bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. Whether working alone or as part of a team, research methods must be innovative and scientifically sound, and directed at meeting the agency's approved objectives. This ability will be reflected in the impact the employee's findings have on the work of the agency and on the course of ongoing research. It may also be reflected in the way Government and industry take up the employee's results.

3.2.2 Other evidence of performance

Other evidence of an employee's performance and standing could include:

- having industry and/or Government implement the results or apply them in education, Government policies and strategies, public management or regulation
- making appropriate contributions to research undertaken by multidisciplinary teams
- making appropriate contributions to committees for agency development, policy and programs
- showing evidence of demonstrable standing within the scientific community, by:
    - winning research funds
    - being an active member of scientific or related policy advisory committees
    - undertaking editorial roles with significant scientific journals

- participating at an executive level in professional societies and agency boards
- being invited to present lead conference papers or write significant reviews in peer-reviewed journals or books
- receiving awards or other forms of recognition by scientific bodies or societies, or other external bodies
- developing a biotechnological product or new industrial process
- communicating and disseminating results to end users and scientific peers
- undertaking responsibility for directing, interacting with and training other scientific staff, and coordinating and overseeing their research activities
- participating in university-level collaboration that leads to supervising graduate students
- producing a tangible outcome such as breeding a new variety of plant or animal or describing a new species of plant or animal
- patenting results from the employee's work.

3.2.3 Publication

Publishing research work in reputable refereed scientific journals and/or writing scientific books are widely accepted means of establishing a personal reputation as a scientist. They are also critical elements in demonstrating achievement.

Where an applicant relies on citations or other indices to illustrate the scientific impact of their publications, the Committee expects them to provide a clear explanation for any claims made about their significance.

Publishing online is the primary medium for communicating scientific research to a relevant readership, whether to the scientific or broader community. However, when evaluating scientific papers and reports, the Committee seeks evidence of peer-level refereeing, comparable to that exercised by leading conventional journals. Similar considerations apply when assessing the significance of other publications such as conference papers, books and book chapters, and peer-reviewed technical reports.

The Committee also appreciates that using popular media and the internet to disseminate research results can provide a quick, broad impact for a Research Scientist. It can also expose the research work to further general scrutiny by the wider community, including those who may ultimately benefit from the work.

Whether an applicant uses scientific publications alone or combines them with other measures of scientific standing as the basis of evaluation, they must provide proof of rigorous scientific endeavour. This must result in successfully conducting and communicating a clearly defined, active research program.

3.2.4 Scientific leadership and individual performance

It is recognised that *Principal Research Scientists* and *Senior Principal Research Scientists* should devote significant time to providing scientific direction and leadership and maintaining and improving the scientific excellence of other scientists. These activities promote and inform the agency's objectives, strategies and policies, and scientific administration that is consistent with their agency's status. Due weight is given to an applicant's contributions to the publications of scientists they supervise. Nevertheless, personal involvement in successful research remains the most important criterion for continuation and progression within the Classification. Refereed publications

are significant indicators of such success. Evidence of significant intellectual contributions to these publications will be sought.

When evaluating an application, other relevant measures of research calibre are also taken into account. These include activities associated with research such as those oriented to industry, computing systems development, policy or confidential work in which the publication record may not adequately reflect research performance and achievements.

3.2.5 Part-time employees, secondment and leave

In the case of part-time employees, or where employees have gone on secondment or taken approved leave (such as parental leave, extended leave or leave without pay), the Committee takes into account the limitations this may place on their research. The Committee looks for evidence of the quality and impact of research that is appropriate to the level of the Classification.

4 Progression through the Classification

4.1 General

Overview of requirements

All Research Scientists must apply to either progress or continue at their current Classification at specified intervals, which are outlined in Schedule 1.

To progress through an efficiency or level barrier, a Research Scientist must:

- meet service requirements (Schedule 1)
- meet performance requirements (section 4)
- apply to progress (section 8).

Progression to the next level of the Classification is not to be regarded as an automatic career advancement or one that is to be expected once a specified time has elapsed. Progression is only available to candidates who meet all, or a substantial majority of, the above criteria to a significant extent.

4.2 Performance requirements – Progression through efficiency barriers

Efficiency barriers exist in the following levels: *Research Scientist*, *Senior Research Scientist* and *Senior Principal Research Scientist*. Progression through an efficiency barrier or to a higher level is determined by the Research Scientist's performance against factors as they apply to the relevant level and area of science. These include:

- demonstrated research ability
- scientific rigour when performing research
- results achieved
- dissemination and communication of results, including showing ongoing and increasing output to scientific publications
- work's relevance to achieving the agency's objectives, and successful knowledge transfer
- reputation and professional standing, including being invited to contribute to reviews and multidisciplinary studies, presenting at major conferences and supervising postgraduate students
- level of industry or other competitive funding received
- cooperation with other major research providers; for example, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and universities
- refereeing papers for internationally recognised journals
- meeting all, or a substantial majority of, the entry criteria to each level of the Classification.

4.3 Performance requirements – Progression through level barriers

To meet the performance requirements to progress to a higher level, the Research Scientist must present a compelling case for advancement. They must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Committee that their ability, achievements and standing have reached the standards expected for the level sought. A Research Scientist must meet all, or a substantial majority of, the relevant criteria for the level being sought.

4.3.1 Progression to *Senior Research Scientist*

Progression to the level of *Senior Research Scientist* is determined by:

- demonstrable increases in the level of scientific rigour, complexity and productivity of the research performed
- demonstrable increases in output to publications, particularly in peer-reviewed scientific journals
- the range, impact and extent of results achieved and the effective dissemination and communication of those results
- evidence of a significant contribution to the agency's general scientific culture and objectives, policy development, program planning or project design
- demonstrable contributions to the scientific, social, industrial, environmental or economic development of the state
- the extent and level of scientific standing, leadership and supervision of other scientists, individually or as a group or team
- having attracted competitive funding, both for their own and their agency's research program.

4.3.2 Progression to *Principal Research Scientist*

Progression to *Principal Research Scientist* is assessed on the basis of expanded scientific achievement and leadership. This will be at a demonstrably superior level to that of a *Senior Research Scientist*, and is determined by:

- high-level scientific rigour, complexity and productivity, and the degree of difficulty of the research performed
- substantial, increasing and consistent output to publications, and the impact achieved in peer-reviewed scientific journals
- scientific results having a considerable impact on government policy and programs, and the extent and nature of dissemination and communication of those results
- a clearly demonstrated impact on their scientific discipline
- integration of the research into the government's broader policy and programs, and making a major contribution to the agency's objectives
- contributions to the scientific, social, industrial, environmental or economic development of the state
- having attracted a high level of competitive funding, both for their own and their agency's research program

- evidence of national and/or international standing, including being an invited keynote speaker to national and international conferences, serving on editorial boards of scientific journals, and reviewing proposals for national and/or international funding bodies.

4.3.3 Progression to *Senior Principal Research Scientist*

Progression to *Senior Principal Research Scientist* is assessed on the basis of continuing scientific achievement and leadership at an expert level. It is determined by:

- having been a *Principal Research Scientist* within the Classification for at least six years (except in exceptional circumstances, which are determined by the Committee)
- having an extensive, consistent and substantial publication record, including publishing high-impact papers in leading peer-reviewed international journals. This includes providing evidence of standing, for example, through being invited to prepare lead review articles in their discipline for leading international journals
- evidence of outstanding innovation and/or originality in the development of their discipline
- research outcomes that have made a significant contribution to the public good, government policy, or the commercialisation of science, or have earned economically valuable returns for their agency if the research is in an appropriate applied field. The applicant must provide evidence that, through their scientific creativity and leadership, they have achieved demonstrable and substantial scientific outcomes that have contributed to the agency achieving its strategic goals. These outcomes must also have contributed – in a consistently significant and constructive manner – to the leadership and culture of their agency
- evidence of primary responsibility for attracting research support in the form of direct funding or funding in kind for their agency. This is based on their scientific leadership and standing, and their ability to demonstrate their superior scientific standing to national and/or international funding agencies
- having established and successfully led research teams and networks of national and/or international significance, adding major value to their individual contributions. They must also provide evidence of contributing to the positive development and creative mentoring of university students and/or junior staff under their supervision.

Note: The *Senior Principal Research Scientist* level is not to be regarded as an automatic career advancement for *Principal Research Scientists*. Rather, this level of the Classification is only available to candidates who meet all, or a substantial majority of, the above criteria to a significant extent.

4.4 Accelerated progression

Successful applications normally progress through an efficiency or level barrier to the next salary step. In exceptional circumstances where the Committee assesses that a Research Scientist at any level has satisfied all the criteria for progression – and has demonstrated sustained, substantial and outstanding performance in relation to their peers at the same level of the Classification – it may recommend accelerated progression to a higher salary step or level. A decision to recommend accelerated progression will be based on the Committee's assessment alone. A Research Scientist cannot apply for it.

4.5 Unsuccessful applications

Unsuccessful applications to progress normally result in the Committee recommending that the applicant continue at the same salary step and reapply after a specified period (see Schedule 1(3)). A recommendation to continue is determined against the criteria set out in section 5. A recommendation of regression or cessation may only be made in accordance with section 6.

5 Continuation in Classification

5.1 General

A fundamental feature of continuation within each level of the Classification is that it is not granted for previous performance, but for active and sustained research and performance in a current or related role. Therefore, Research Scientists must bring the achievements from their continuing research before the Committee for assessment within specified time periods. It is not sufficient for an applicant to demonstrate a willingness or capability to undertake research, a past but lapsed research career, or that management or administrative duties have overtaken their research.

It is a requirement that to remain in the Classification a person must be assigned to a role that has primary responsibility for conducting scientific research. Where a Research Scientist's primary responsibility is no longer conducting scientific research, the matter is to be resolved by the agency. Being transferred to another agency (for example, because of machinery of government changes) will not affect the Research Scientist's continuation if the Committee is satisfied that appropriate research is being undertaken in the new agency.

Unsuccessful applications for continuation may result in the Committee recommending regression or cessation, in accordance with section 6.

Overview of requirements

Research Scientists are required to apply to either progress or continue at the specified intervals outlined in Schedule 1. A Research Scientist who fails to apply within the time limits required by these Guidelines may be removed from the Classification. The NSW Chief Scientist decides the matter, based on the Committee's recommendation and in consultation with the head of the Research Scientist's agency. Before the Committee makes a recommendation, the Research Scientist is given an opportunity to show cause as to why they should not be removed from the Classification, and their response is taken into consideration.

Once reaching an efficiency or level barrier, a Research Scientist must:

- meet service requirements (Schedule 1)
- meet performance requirements (section 5)
- apply to progress or continue (section 8).

5.2 Performance criteria for continuation

5.2.1 *Research Scientist*

To continue at this level, a *Research Scientist's* scientific performance must demonstrate an appropriate level of:

- research and publication output
- continuing high professional standing
- contribution to the agency's objectives.

5.2.2 *Senior Research Scientist*

To continue at this level, a *Senior Research Scientist's* scientific performance must meet the standard achieved when they progressed to this level. This means they must continue to demonstrate an appropriate level of:

- research and publication output
- scientific leadership and research direction, including, where appropriate, contributing to mentoring and assessment of other scientists
- continuing high professional standing
- significant contributions to the agency's objectives.

5.2.3 *Principal Research Scientist*

To continue at this level, a *Principal Research Scientist's* scientific performance must meet the standard achieved when they progressed to this level. This means they must continue to demonstrate an appropriate level of:

- research and publication output
- continuing evidence that they are passing skills on to other research staff where appropriate
- scientific leadership and direction, including, where appropriate, contributing to mentoring and assessment of other scientists
- impact in their field of science
- continuing high national and/or international standing, making a major contribution to the agency's and government objectives.

5.2.4 *Senior Principal Research Scientist*

To continue at this level, a *Senior Principal Research Scientist's* scientific performance must meet the standard achieved when they progressed to this level. This means they must continue to demonstrate:

- extensive research and publication output on a national and international scale
- continuing evidence that they are passing on skills to other research staff
- high-level scientific leadership and direction, including providing direction to, mentoring and assessing other scientists
- an ongoing high impact on their field of science
- continuing outstanding national and international professional standing
- make a substantial and consistent contributions to the agency's and government objectives
- if in an applied field, their ongoing contribution to policy, the public good or the commercialisation of science, or that they have earned economically valuable returns for their agency.

6 Regression and cessation

6.1 Procedure for regression or cessation

The Committee may recommend the regression of a Research Scientist to a lower salary step or level, or that they cease to be in the Classification.

The Committee may not recommend the regression or cessation of a Research Scientist unless it has:

- determined that the Research Scientist's performance does not meet the criteria at their current level
- advised the Research Scientist that their performance is unsatisfactory and given clear reasons for this finding
- advised the Research Scientist of actions that can be taken to rectify the identified performance deficiencies, specifying a time frame. If the Research Scientist fails to act in time, they should be given an opportunity to show cause as to why they should not be regressed or ceased
- considered the Research Scientist's response to the above.

7 Notification of decisions

7.1 Notification of outcomes

After taking into account the Committee's recommendations, the NSW Chief Scientist notifies the agency head of the outcome of an application. The agency head then notifies the applicant of the outcome, including the Committee's supporting commentary.

7.2 Review of decisions

A recipient of an unsuccessful outcome can request a review of a decision by presenting a compelling case to the NSW Chief Scientist:

- within 28 days of the written notice of the decision
- through their agency
- on the grounds of denial of procedural fairness.

On receiving such a request, the NSW Chief Scientist appoints an appropriate person (the reviewer) to review the process leading to the Committee's recommendation.

If the reviewer is satisfied that the process was procedurally fair, they will confirm the decision.

If the reviewer is satisfied that the process was not procedurally fair, the NSW Chief Scientist will convene Committee members who did not assess the original application. This new Committee will assess the applicant's original application in accordance with these Guidelines, to provide a recommendation to the NSW Chief Scientist for consideration.

8 Application procedures

8.1 Application's documentation

The Committee calls for applications each year by advertising on the OCSE website. All applicants need to complete and submit an online application form via the Research Scientist Classification page on the OCSE website.

Applicants must ensure that all details on the application form are correct. The OCSE website provides information for applicants, agencies and referees on the application process and time frames for submitting individual components. Once on the Classification, an application (for either continuation or progression) must be submitted at least every three years, unless a prior exemption has been granted.

The online application includes the following, all of which must be completed:

- **A summary statement** – This should concisely highlight the key elements of the applicant's claim for consideration for entry to, continuation on, or progression in the Classification
- **Detailed evidence supporting the claim** – In presenting this material, applicants should clearly address each of the performance requirements, as set out in the Guidelines. Evidence under four criteria should be presented as concisely as possible and in accordance with the instructions on the online application form, making use of summary tables or graphs as attachments wherever relevant
  - **Past research and Innovation** – a succinct account of research the applicant has been undertaking. New applicants should include research activities before and since their appointment to their NSW Government Sector role. Applicants already on the Classification should focus on research since their last interview, with project involvement and scientific publications arising from the research cross-referenced to appended project and publications lists
  - **Impact of research** – an account of the real or potential value of the applicant's research activities that aligns with the agency's objectives and operations. It should include an outline of any cooperative group studies and/or knowledge transfer within the agency or to stakeholders
  - **Leadership** – this should reference contributions that demonstrate the applicant's expertise and standing in the scientific community. It could include supervising students and other scientific staff, receiving invitations to prepare reviews or plenary papers, and significant awards or other formal recognition. It should outline any contribution to the broader scientific program within your team, division or agency, and your input to the broader goals of your agency
  - **Planned future research, impact, and leadership activities** – Provide details about your plans for the next 2-5 years, at a level that is appropriate for continuation at your current level on the Classification, or that might support progression through an Efficiency Barrier or to a higher level.

There are sometimes circumstances that impact on an applicant's ability to meet the performance requirements set out in these Guidelines (absence on approved leave, changing role requirements, etc). Where such circumstances apply, details of these extenuating circumstances can be included in the online application.

- **Supervisor's report** – All applicants must ensure their immediate supervisor is able to provide a succinct report to accompany their application. It should outline the relevance and impact of their research to the agency's objectives and related requirements. This report should include an assessment of the applicant's research performance, impact and leadership.

- **Referees** – All applicants must nominate three independent referees (not including their immediate agency supervisor or Director). The referees should be well positioned to comment on the applicant's current research achievements, standing among their peers in the scientific community, and/or the relevance and impact of the research to stakeholder, agency, or government objectives. In nominating referees, applicants should include at least one person who can comment on their achievements from a position of genuine independence, free of conflicting interests.

Applicants must ensure that referees are aware of, and agree to, their nomination, and are familiar with the Policy and Guidelines that direct the Committee's deliberations. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that their nominated referees respond within the required time frame. If a referee's report has not been submitted, the applicant's written application is distributed to the interview panel without it, which may affect the outcome. In addition, it is recommended that the applicant should ensure that their referees know about their current research achievements and claims by providing the referees with a copy of their application.

The Committee seeks reports from the nominated referees and relies on at least two of these. The Committee reserves the right to consult with other referees if this is necessary to assist with their deliberations.

8.2 Annual review

The Committee reviews applications annually, following advertising on the OCSE website. If called for interview, applicants should ensure that they are available for interview on the day advised.

The initiative for making an application rests with the Research Scientist. Employees already within the Classification must ensure they apply for continuance or progression, as required by the Guidelines (i.e. at least every third year).

In special circumstances, the NSW Chief Scientist, in consultation with the Committee may consider a request for an extension from a Research Scientist's agency. Special circumstances may include, but would not be limited to, personal circumstances or other situations outside the Research Scientist's control that have caused them to fail to meet the due date set for the agency to receive applications.

9 Agency obligations

9.1 Agency documentation

The agency must maintain the employment records of any Research Scientist who enters the Classification, to allow quick access to historical information about their entry, continuation, progression, regression or removal, as appropriate.

It is the responsibility of research scientists to apply to either progress or continue (Section 5.1 and Schedule 1.6). However, the agency may support Research Scientists to be aware of their review date and any obligations they have regarding their continuation in the Classification.

9.2 Assistance with applications

An agency may, at its discretion, provide support and mentoring to a Research Scientist in preparing their application and interview.

10 Salary structure

10.1 Salary on entry

The Committee has the discretion to recommend the entry point (level and year) based on its assessment of the applicant's level of achievement relative to the criteria set out in the Guidelines. The Committee may recommend appointment at a salary that is lower than what the applicant currently receives in their substantive role. In this case, the applicant's agency maintains the applicant's current substantive salary and any increments that would have applied until the applicant progresses to a level within the Classification that has a higher salary. That salary then applies.

10.2 Progression by increment

A Research Scientist may progress through the structure by the increments shown in Schedule 1. This progression is to be in accordance with the Increments and Progression clause in the Award and the progression requirements in these Guidelines. The Award specifies that payment of increments is subject to the Research Scientist's satisfactory performance and conduct, as determined by their agency head.

10.3 Salary rates

Salary rates for Research Scientists are contained in the Award, or any replacement award. Salary rates in this award are adjusted by the *Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries 2024)* Award, or any replacement award.

Schedule 1: Service requirements

1. Once on the Classification, an application, for continuation or progression, **must be submitted every 3 years,** unless directed by the Committee to do otherwise.
2. Employees at the level of *Research Scientist*, *Senior Research Scientist* and *Senior Principal Research Scientist* may apply for progression, either through an efficiency barrier or to the next level, once they have been at the top of a Level or at an Efficiency Barrier for 12 months.
3. *Principal Research Scientists* can only apply for progression to *Senior Principal Research Scientist* after being at the top of the Level for 36 months.
4. Where a Research Scientist at any level is unsuccessful in a progression application but is approved to continue at their current salary step, they may apply for continuation or progression 24 months after the unsuccessful application. They can only apply after 12 months if recommended by the Committee.
5. All application submission time frames apply to all Research Scientists at any level, whether they are full-time or part-time employees.
6. All Research Scientists are responsible for ensuring that they always submit their application by the deadline. Research Scientists who do not submit an application and have not received written approval to defer will need to seek approval from the NSW Chief Scientist via their agency to remain on the Classification, per the following process:

- Agencies identify Research Scientists who have failed to apply after the closing date for applications.
- Agency requests “show cause” from the Research Scientist.
- Research Scientist provides “show cause” to agency within two weeks of request.

- Agencies consider “show cause” and decides whether they endorse the Research Scientist’s explanation for not applying.
- Agencies send the Research Scientist’s “show cause” correspondence and whether they endorse the Research Scientist’s explanation to the Chair of the Committee.

- Chair considers requests – may seek advice from Committee.
- Chair provides recommendation to the NSW Chief Scientist.

- NSW Chief Scientist considers all information and communicates one of the following outcomes to the agency:
  - Outcome 1: NSW Chief Scientist accepts the Research Scientist’s explanation and defers their application until the next year.
  - Outcome 2: NSW Chief Scientist does not accept the Research Scientist’s explanation and notifies of the Research Scientist’s removal from the Classification.

- Agency actions the decision made by the NSW Chief Scientist.

7. Where a Research Scientist at any level has been absent on approved leave for an extended period since their previous application, an application is still required every three years unless approval for deferral has been granted. The period away from normal duties is taken into consideration in determining the entitlement for continuation or progression in the Classification.
8. Under extenuating circumstances, and with the support of the agency, Research Scientists at any level may request to defer submitting an application until the next year. This request must be in writing and in advance of the application deadline per the following process:

    - Agencies notify RSC staff when requests for deferral are open.
    - RSC staff submit requests via email to agency.

    - Agencies consider deferral requests.
    - Unsupported requests are notified via email.
    - Supported requests are provided via email to RSC Chair by agency.

    - Chair considers requests – may seek advice from Committee.
    - Chair communicates outcome to Research Scientist and agency by email prior to the opening of applications.

Table 1: Structure of Research Classification, with number of steps in each Classification Level and the position of the Efficiency Barrier in each Classification Level.

Classification level	Salary step
Research Scientist	Year 1
	Year 2
	Year 3
	Year 4
	Efficiency barrier
	Year 5
	Year 6
	Year 7
	Level barrier
Senior Research Scientist	Year 1
	Year 2
	Year 3
	Efficiency barrier
	Year 4
	Year 5
	Level barrier
Principal Research Scientist	Year 1
	Year 2
	Year 3
	Level barrier
Senior Principal Research Scientist	Year 1
	Year 2
	Efficiency barrier
	Year 3

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