

Project Scientist Series: Merit and Promotion Standards

Department of Physics

Adopted: TBD

The Department of Physics follows University of California policy ([APM 311](#)) and UC San Diego campus procedures ([PPM 230-311](#)) regarding the appointment, reappointment, merit increase, and promotion of Project Scientists.

Project Scientists are expected to make significant and creative contributions to research programs under the supervision of a faculty member or Research Scientist. While they are not required to establish independent research programs, they must demonstrate originality, professional competence, and contributions that advance the research mission.

Evaluation for merit and promotion is based primarily on research contributions and professional competence. Significant, original, and creative input into research projects is required. These contributions may include publications, data products, software, instrumentation, or other scholarly outputs. For collaborative projects, the individual's role should be clearly identified and delineated. Professional competence is shown through technical expertise, sustained scholarly engagement, and participation in collaborations, conferences, or other professional activities. Service to the University or profession is not required, but may be considered positively. Mentor letters from the supervisor are an important component of the file and must provide detailed information on the candidate's intellectual and technical contributions, their role in projects, and overall impact.

Merit advancement depends on evidence of continuing contributions of high quality and significance to research programs. Accelerated advancement may be recommended when accomplishments substantially exceed normal expectations, such as demonstrated leadership in major research projects or publications, obtaining Co-Principal Investigator status on competitive grants, or significant achievements in the design, development, or commissioning of research tools, instruments, or data resources.

Promotion is a career review that reflects cumulative contributions and growth. Advancement from Assistant to Associate Project Scientist requires demonstrated creativity, independent judgment, and meaningful contributions, which may include first- or senior-author publications, major technical deliverables, or leadership roles within project teams. Advancement from Associate to Project Scientist requires a sustained record of impactful contributions across multiple projects, recognition within the field, and continued evidence of high professional competence, such as peer-reviewed publications, leadership in collaborations, and innovative contributions to research.