

**School of Biological Sciences**  
**Merit Standards – Specialist Series**  
**Last update: October 31, 2016**

Specialists are evaluated on the special skills, experience, and knowledge they provide to a specific research project and **on their professional competence and activity** directly related to their professional expertise. Professional activities may include: participating in appropriate professional/technical societies or groups and other educational and research organizations; reviewing research proposals; and/or reviewing journal manuscripts and other publications related to his/her area of expertise.

Specialists provide considerable, independent **input into the planning and execution of research**; however, they generally work under the direct supervision of their faculty sponsor. Specialists must be continuously and effectively engaged in research activity of scholarly quality and significance in the defined area of expertise and specialization. Because publication is typically dependent on the productivity of the faculty sponsor, contributions to research are judged primarily on evidence of contributions to specific projects (***as outlined by the sponsor in the original appointment letter and in each subsequent reappointment file***). **This may be measured by** publications on which the Specialist is an author or credited **in the Acknowledgement section of a publication**, such as when a Specialist provides a specific technical service to the acknowledged work. Although one cannot provide a simple metric on evaluating such productivity, contributions to at least one publication per year is expected for Specialists under the supervision of sponsors at the Associate and Full Professor ranks. However, sponsors/reviewers may exercise reasonable flexibility in assessing and balancing heavier commitments and responsibilities in one area against lighter commitments and responsibilities in another area.

Accelerations are considered when individuals in this series demonstrate a higher level of independence and creativity and provide significantly greater intellectual as well as experimental input into research programs and their respective publications or provide exceptional leadership and service in the laboratory or to the campus. Regarding publications, it should be clearly demonstrated that the combination of high impact publications, first authored publications, the number of publications, and the quality of the journals in which they are published exceeds normal "expectations" outlined above.