Research Associate, Senior Research Associate and Research Scientist

Policy and Procedures

School of Medicine
Case Western Reserve University

Eligibility

1. Research Associate (RA) and Senior Research Associate (SRA) positions are expected to hold a PhD, MD, or other terminal doctoral degree. To be eligible for SRA appointment, the individual must hold a PhD, MD, or other terminal doctoral degree and have a minimum of three years of post-graduate research experience. In exceptional circumstances, the degree requirement may be waived by having sufficient additional years of research experience or highly specialized skills (e.g., information technology).

2. The Research Scientist (RS) position requires a PhD, MD or other terminal doctoral degree. An RS is a staff scientist or member of professional staff with more advanced skills than a SRA, and/or fulfilling critical functions, and/or with advanced scientific responsibilities, and/or working virtually independently. Other justification may be proposed for designation by the Review Panel for appointment as a RS. Individuals appropriate for consideration for RS appointment may also be SRA’s assuming greater autonomy than in the past or former faculty members whose career goals have changed but who wish to remain at CWRU while carrying out significant research responsibilities. RS may apply for and be named PI on a grant. Department Chairs will forward RS nominations to the panel on behalf of faculty requesting such appointments along with a proposed job description and current CV. Final decisions on such appointments rest with the office of the Vice Dean for Research on behalf of the Dean.

Appointment Process

1. A RA/SRA/RS Review Panel (Review Panel), including clinical and laboratory investigators, experienced department administrators, and School of Medicine’s (SOM) Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources (FAHR) representatives will review all proposed RA/SRA/RS job descriptions, new position requests, proposed salaries, annual reviews and promotion requests.

2. Proposals for new positions or to reappoint RA’s, SRA’s and RS’s must include a job description. These will 1) enable the RA/SRA/RS to understand their supervisor’s expectations; and 2) enable the Review Panel to assure that the RA/SRA/RS is placed in the appropriate position level and salary. A job description template is located on the FAHR website.

3. The Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources (FAHR) will grant search approval once the New Position Request (Form #1) and job description have been approved by the Review Panel, the funding has been approved by SOM Office of Finance and Planning and upon receipt of all other appropriate documentation. The Department sponsoring a new RA/SRA/RS appointment must conduct an open search for the position, requiring at a minimum a posting on the CWRU Academic Listings website (http://blog.case.edu/human-resources/employment/academic/) for five business days; additional advertising is recommended and encouraged. Once a candidate has been identified, the Department must complete a Request for Letter of Offer (Form #2) and submit to FAHR. FAHR will generate the letter of appointment and send it to the Department administrator to be signed by the Chair and also by the candidate as acceptance of the offer.

4. Research Associates are eligible for promotion to Senior Research Associate after 3 years of either post-graduate research experience or service as a RA. All RAs should be reviewed for promotion to SRA after 7 years of service. Promotions are effective the first of the following month upon approval.
**Compensation**

1. Based on the job description, new RA/SRA/RS salaries will be set according to the following criteria: 1) the number of years since award of terminal degree or, where appropriate, years of research experience relevant to the position’s responsibilities; 2) the individual’s laboratory supervisory responsibilities, if any; and 3) scientific responsibilities ranging from primarily technical (e.g., core facility equipment management) to primarily creative, innovative, or discovery-focused.

2. Salaries should be set according to the criteria listed above. These criteria, rather than the funding available, should be used to set the RA/SRA/RS salary. For individuals with a visa, proposed salaries must be at or above the prevailing wage determined by the Prevailing Wage Analysis prepared by the Office of Immigration and Human Resource Services. Departments will be expected to follow these guidelines and policies to establish RA/SRA/RS salaries within the department on an equitable basis. The panel will monitor the departments, permitting some variation in salaries as appropriate.

3. The Review Panel will categorize each RA and SRA into one of four levels as follows:

   - 0 to 5 years since degree, no supervisory responsibilities, and primarily technical or minimally discovery-oriented research responsibilities. Annual salaries should range from $35,000 to $45,000. *(Minimum salary increasing to $37,500 effective January 1, 2014)*
   - 3 to 7 years since degree, none or light supervisory responsibilities, and primarily technical or minimally discovery-oriented research responsibilities. Annual salaries should range from $40,000 to $55,000.
   - 5-15 years since degree, some supervisory experience, and/or research responsibilities that are toward the high end of the technical to discovery-oriented continuum. Annual salaries should range from $45,000 to $65,000.
   - 10 or more years since degree, and/or either significant supervisory responsibilities and/or discovery-oriented research responsibilities. Annual salaries should range from $55,000 to amounts required by the market.

Staff members with highly specialized skills, (e.g. bioinformatics, physics, computer science, biostatistics, etc.) may receive salaries above these ranges.

These initial ranges may be reviewed on an on-going basis and may be adjusted by the School of Medicine as needed in order to meet market needs while ensuring equity among the RA population.

**New Hire Orientation**

1. New hires and transfers within their first 90 days of a position are considered to be within the orientation (i.e., probationary) period. During the RA/SRA/RS’s first 90 days of employment, the supervisor has the opportunity to assess the employee’s performance and confirm that they will be successful in their position or may request to sever employment. Written orientation reviews should be conducted at 45 days of employment and just before 90 days of employment, using the Orientation Period Review form, and shared with the employee and FAHR. In the event that additional time is needed to assess the individual’s performance, contact the FAHR HR Manager before the end of the first 90 days to discuss extending the orientation period to 120 days. Extensions must be approved by FAHR HR prior to the supervisor communicating the extension with the employee.

2. If termination within the first 90 days is considered, contact SOM Human Resources in FAHR
prior to the individual’s 90th day of employment within the department to proceed with this process. Please be aware that termination of a RA/SRA/RS may occur after the orientation period; however, termination after the individual’s 90th day in the position is subject to the corrective action process.

Annual Review

1. Each RA, SRA, and RS must have an identified supervisor. The supervisor must review each annually utilizing the Annual Activity and Review Form. Reviews should be submitted before the end of the individual’s appointment and should be completed thoroughly. Reviews must include comments from the supervisor in order to provide a summary evaluation of the individual’s performance during the review period.

2. Proposed salary increases should be based on the compensation guidelines above as well as the annual SOM budget and compensation guidelines for merit increases. Salary increases outside of the merit increase guidelines will be considered.

Non-Re-Appointment & Termination

1. If a RA, SRA or RS position will not be renewed, the Department must inform FAHR more than 45 days prior to the appointment date. FAHR will provide the department a notification letter template which requires the Chair’s signature. The notification letter should then be provided to the RA/SRA/RS at least 45 days prior to the appointment end date. Provide FAHR with a copy of the letter and confirmation of the notification date. Notification of termination (oral or written) that does not follow the FAHR notification procedure, including the letter prepared by FAHR, will not be deemed as formal 45-day notification of termination.

2. If a RA, SRA or RS does not meet the expectations of the position and has been in the position for less than 90 days, contact SOM Human Resources in FAHR to discuss the Orientation Period termination process.

3. If a RA, SRA or RS does not meet the expectations of the position and has been in the position for more than 90 days, contact SOM Human Resources in FAHR to begin the Positive Corrective Action process. The process includes verbal warning, written warning, suspension and termination. Per policy III-3 Positive Corrective Action, “Corrective action is not always a continuous process and can be imposed at any step. Supervisors may use one or more corrective actions at their discretion.”

4. In the event that a RA/SRA/RS position must be eliminated prior to the appointment end date, e.g., due to grant funding, a restructuring of the laboratory, etc., a Reorganization Request Guide (available from FAHR) must be completed and the RA/SRA/RS and all other staff positions affected must be indicated on the request. Reorganizations (i.e., layoffs) are reviewed for approval by Employee Relations and office of General Counsel. If the reorganization is approved, the individual will be formally notified, by SOM HR and the supervisor. If eligible, the individual will be provided lay-off benefits. Per CWRU policy II-17, “If an employee is eligible for severance pay, the amount of severance to be provided will be determined individually but will generally be one week base pay for each complete year of continuous employment, up to a total of ten weeks’ base pay.”
Appointing New Research Associates, Senior Research Associates and Research Scientist

1. Complete & submit Form #1: Research Associate/Senior Research Associate/Research Scientist New Position Approval form (must include a job description).

2. Position will be reviewed and approved by the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources, the Office of Finance and Planning and the RA/SRA/RS Review Panel for title and salary.

5. Approval of Position Opening will be emailed to department administrator.

6. Department will post/advertise all searches for a minimum of 5 days on CWRU website. (Email postings to employment@case.edu).

7. Conduct interviews and identify candidate. Internal candidates who meet the minimum qualifications of the position should be interviewed. (Notify HR to delete the CWRU website listing).


9. A letter of offer will be generated and sent to the department administrator.

10. The department chair signs the letter of offer and the department sends the letter to the candidate; the candidate signs the letter and returns it to the department prior to the first day of employment. A copy of the signed letter is sent to the supervisor, the department administrator, and a copy of the signed letter along with a completed Payroll Data Salary (pd) form is returned to the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources.

Annual Re-Appointment for Research Associates, Senior Research Associates and Research Scientists

Research Associate/Senior Research Associate/Research Scientists appointments are generally for a twelve month period and are annually renewable. Each RA/SRA/RS together with their supervisor must complete an Annual Activity & Review form.

1. Complete & submit Form #3 Research Associate/Senior Research Associate/Research Scientist Reappointment Approval (with attached listed documentation including an updated job description) to Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources.

2. The reappointment request will be reviewed by the Review Panel.

3. Once approved, the department administrator will be notified and sent a letter of reappointment, which will require the department chair’s signature as well as the candidate’s signature. A copy of the signed letter is sent to the supervisor, the department administrator, and a copy of the signed letter along with a completed Payroll Data Salary (pd) form is returned to the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources.

Promoting a Research Associate to Senior Research Associate

After a minimum of three years of research work experience beyond terminal degree, all Research Associates may be considered for promotion to Senior Research Associate.

1. Complete and submit Form #4 Research Associate to Senior Research Associate Promotion
2. The promotion request will be reviewed by the Review Panel.

3. Once approved, the department administrator will be notified and sent a letter of promotion, which will require the department chair’s signature as well as the candidate’s signature. A copy of the signed letter is sent to the supervisor, the department administrator, and a copy of the signed letter along with a completed Payroll Data Salary (pd) form is returned to the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources.

*For promotion to Research Scientist, contact the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources.