



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
CASE WESTERN RESERVE  
UNIVERSITY

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (RA), SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (SRA)  
AND RESEARCH SCIENTIST (RS)**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

All questions and materials should be directed to:

Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources

SOM-humanresources@case.edu

Phone: 216-368-3870

Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, and Research Scientist positions are staff positions managed through the SOM Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources. Those who hold these positions may assume a variety of research roles ranging from carrying out experiments to managing others to creative leadership within a laboratory. Individuals in these positions are expected to have received terminal degrees, most commonly PhD or MD, or have highly specialized skills in technical areas. The eligibility for each position varies based on degrees received, prior experience, and skills demonstrated.

Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, and Research Scientist positions, ideally, should be fully funded on CWRU grants and/or serve in CWRU-funded research roles such as CWRU-based research cores. Especially for positions in clinical departments located in one of our affiliated hospitals, it must first be determined whether the job duties are conducted primarily for the benefit of the medical school or the hospital. Factors CWRU will consider to determine whether it or the hospital will receive the primary benefit of the position's activities will be 1) the nature of the activity or work being performed; 2) the employment of the supervisor; 3) the population being served; 4) the space in which the activity or work is performed; 5) the funding source for the salary; and 6) other circumstances that may be relevant to the particular situation. To be employed by CWRU, the position should be evaluated at 50% or more for each of these factors. Therefore, positions employed by CWRU should perform duties in CWRU space or in a space where CWRU research is conducted and should be supervised by a CWRU employee, usually a faculty member. While the correct employer for some jobs will be very clear, for others it may be 'grey.' If, after developing a job description and considering the factors above, the correct employer is not clear, please send your inquiry to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu).

CWRU Visa policies apply to Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, and Research Scientist positions. CWRU provides visa services for faculty and staff (whether paid or unpaid) who are engaged in activities that primarily benefit CWRU's mission of education and research. For more information regarding visas, please refer to the CWRU Office of Immigration and Human Resource Services website (<https://case.edu/finadmin/humres/ffs/index.html>) and the SOM Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources website (<http://casemed.case.edu/facultyaffairs/administrators/foreignvisitors.cfm>). You may also contact the SOM Office at [SOMVisa@case.edu](mailto:SOMVisa@case.edu).

**POSITION REQUIREMENTS**

Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, and Research Scientist are appointed positions that typically require the incumbent hold a PhD, MD, or other terminal doctoral degree in the related field. The selected individuals are appointed for a 12-month period and appointments may be renewed annually. The minimum requirements and benefits for these three positions vary; the selected title should reflect the work that will be expected within the 12-month appointment period.

Research Associate ("RA") – A terminal degree is required (PhD, MD). Candidates are not required to have been previously employed in a research capacity, but they are expected to have expert knowledge of the field and at a minimum have had some hands-on research experience relevant to the position for which they are being considered.

Senior Research Associate ("SRA") – A terminal degree is required (PhD, MD). A minimum of three years of

post-terminal degree experience related to position expectations is required. It is expected that candidates have expert knowledge of the field through complex hands-on experience. Senior Research Associates are often responsible for supervising lab staff.

Research Scientist (“RS”) – A terminal degree is required (PhD, MD). A minimum of five years of post-terminal degree related experience or demonstrated expert skills and knowledge related to critical research functions is required. Research Scientists often have advanced scientific responsibilities and should be expected to work independently. Research Scientists are typically expected to write, submit, and serve as the PI on their own grants. Candidates appropriate for consideration for Research Scientist appointments may be new hires, Senior Research Associates assuming greater autonomy, or they may have been former faculty members at CWRU who carry significant research responsibilities as staff members.

## **POSITION REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL SKILLS (“STS”) POSITIONS**

Research Associate/Senior Research Associate/Research Scientist – Specialized Technical Skills: Research staff working in Bioinformatics, Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Large Database Management have specialized technical skills that are in short supply and command a premium in the marketplace over and above those skills held by their fellow RAs, SRAs, and RSs. Accordingly, we designate individuals working in these fields as Research Associates-Specialized Technical Skills (RA- STS), Senior Research Associates-Specialized Technical Skills (SRA-STS), and Research Scientists- Specialized Technical Skills (RS-STS) respectively, and, in order to recruit and retain qualified candidates, we establish specific expectations and compensation ranges for these positions.

Specialized Technical Skills are recognized in Bioinformatics, Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Large Database Management. A department may propose candidates for STS appointment based on other content areas. Specialized technical skills may have been acquired through coursework, earned degrees, employment, consulting, or advisory experience. A terminal degree is preferred but not required for a Specialized Technical Skills appointment. RA-STS status requires no prior experience, SRA-STS status requires 3 years prior experience, and RS-STS status requires either 5 years of experience or a prior faculty appointment.

All RA/SRA/RS and STS personnel processes, including initial appointments, reappointments, promotions, salary increases and terminations, will be reviewed and must be approved by the RA/SRA/RS Review Committee. In addition, all new Research Scientist positions must be approved by the Vice Dean for Research on behalf of the Dean.

If a Principal Investigator or department is in doubt regarding which position suits their needs best, they should contact the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources at [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu) for assistance. Current RAs, SRAs and RSs may be re-categorized to a Specialized Skill position if the benchmarks apply.

If the RA/SRA/RS requires a visa, the department must initiate/complete the visa process **concurrently** with the appointment/reappointment process. When both processes are complete, the Faculty Affairs and Human Resources Office will generate the Dean’s letter for visa purposes and will provide the department with the approved text of an appointment/reappointment letter sent by the department to the staff member for employment purposes. Visa info can be found on the [Faculty Affairs & Human Resources Foreign Visitor & Visa Applications website](#).

## **COMPENSATION**

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.

Salaries should be set according to the criteria listed above. 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 establish RA/SRA/RS salaries within the department on an equitable basis. The RA/SRA/RS Review Committee will monitor salaries within the departments and throughout SOM.

Initial salaries for Research Associate, Senior Research Associate and Research Scientist positions should be determined by the following guidelines, effective December 1, 2016.

- 0 to 5 years since degree, no supervisory responsibilities, and primarily non-specialized technical or minimally discovery-oriented research responsibilities. Annual salaries should range from \$47,476 to \$54,500
- 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 \$50,000 to \$60,000
- 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 \$55,000 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 \$59,500 to amounts required by the market.
- Minimum annual salary for Research Scientist is \$55,000. Salaries should be based on the criteria above; however, salaries may be set above these ranges based on level of experience, skill and/or market value.
- Specialized Technical Skill (STS) positions may receive salaries above these ranges based on level of experience and/or market value.

These ranges will 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 APPOINTMENTS**

New Position Search Requests should be submitted through the online RA/SRA/RS Appointment system, [New Position Search Request Submission Link: RA/SRA/RS](#). This system is based in Google Drive Forms. All required information must be entered into the form and a job description, based on the CWRU job description template, must be uploaded to the online form. A job posting may be uploaded as well. Job descriptions for RA/SRA/RS positions should be generated using the CWRU job description template, which are located on the CWRU Human Resources website and also on the Office of Faculty Affairs and Human Resources website. The job description should describe the research project and the expectations of the position related to the research and operations within the lab/research group. Job descriptions should also include required or preferred prior experience, expertise, education and the skills required to effectively meet or exceed the expectations of the position.

The New Position Request will be reviewed by SOM Human Resources, the SOM Office of Finance and Planning for budget review and approval, and the RA/SRA/RS Review Committee. Requests for Research Scientist positions will also be submitted to the Vice Dean for Research for substantive review and approval.

Once all approvals have been secured, the department administrator will be notified via email, which will include instructions for posting the position. Positions must be posted on the CWRU academic careers website for a minimum of 5 days. Broader distribution of open positions is encouraged but not required. Please be sure the posting includes instructions to candidates on how to apply.

All qualified applicants must be considered for the position and all internal candidates who meet the minimum qualifications must be interviewed.

Once the position has been posted for at least 5 days and a candidate has been selected, the department administrator should submit a Request for Offer Letter in the online RA/SRA/RS Appointment system, [Request for Offer Letter Submission Link: RA/SRA/RS](#). All required information must be entered into the form and all required documentation must be uploaded to the online form. Documentation includes: 1) the notice of search approval, 2) proof of posting, 3) the candidate's CV; 4) proof of terminal degree, and 5) affirmative action documents. If needed, visa request documents should be submitted directly to [SOMVisa@case.edu](mailto:SOMVisa@case.edu). Please be aware that new appointments will not be back-dated. Contact SOM HR for any questions regarding eligible candidates and start dates.

If the materials submitted are complete and satisfactory, SOM HR will email the appointment letter to the department administrator. The department administrator should review the letter and contact SOM HR if any revisions are necessary. Once finalized, the letter must be printed on letterhead and signed by the department chair, and then should be presented to the selected candidate by the hiring manager. The letter requires the employee's signature to indicate acceptance of the offer of promotion and appointment. The department administrator and/or the supervisor should assure that the new employee successfully completes all CWRU employment requirements, especially the I-9 process requiring proof of identity and qualification for employment. Individuals who have not completed their new hire paperwork, including I-9, are not permitted to

begin working and will not be compensated for work performed prior to the completion of the I-9 process and submission of a signed offer letter. The candidate should take a copy of their signed offer letter to HR when they attend New Hire Orientation or on their first day of employment, whichever comes first. New hires who currently hold a postdoctoral position in the university are required to successfully complete the new employment requirements, including attending New Hire Orientation. Prior to the new employee's start date or immediately following, the department administrator should email the signed offer letter and the Personal Data Salary Authorization (PD) form to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu).

Supervisors should make sure to complete the new employee's Orientation Review at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months. Policies, procedures, and forms are located on the [CWRU Human Resources Evaluation Staff During Orientation webpage](#). Completed orientation review forms should be submitted to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu) and [HRRecords@case.edu](mailto:HRRecords@case.edu). Supervisors concerned with an employee's performance should contact SOM Human Resources at [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu) prior to the 3-month anniversary to discuss options for addressing the performance issues.

## **REAPPOINTMENTS**

Principal Investigators/supervisors are required to provide RAs, SRAs, and RSs with a documented performance review annually. An annual review must be provided even if budgetary or other reasons lead the PI not to recommend a salary increase. Contact SOM HR to discuss exceptions if needed due to funding or performance. Prior to an individual's current appointment end date, the employee and PI/ supervisor must complete the annual activity review form, including a summary evaluation of the individual's performance during the appointment period.

Proposed salary increases should be based on the quality of the individual's work, the compensation guidelines below, and the annual SOM budget and compensation guidelines for merit increases. Justifications for salary increase requests outside of the merit increase guidelines will be considered.

Prior to the end of the individual's current appointment, the department administrator should submit a Reappointment Request through the online RA/SRA/RS Appointment system, [Reappointment Request Submission Link: RA/SRA/RS](#). The following documents will be required for review and consideration of the renewal: 1) the completed Annual Activity form with supervisor comments, 3) the individual's current CV, and 4) a current job description with updated roles and responsibilities highlighted. If a Visa renewal is applicable and needed at that time, send Visa renewal application documents to [SOMVisa@case.edu](mailto:SOMVisa@case.edu). The renewal request will be reviewed by SOM Human Resources and the RA/SRA/RS Review Committee. Renewal requests with significant salary increase requests or non-grant funding may be subject to review by the Office of Finance and Planning.

Once all approvals have been secured, SOM HR will send the department administrator the notification of approval and the appointment offer letter. The department administrator should review the letter and contact SOM HR if any revisions are necessary. Once finalized, the letter must be printed on letterhead and signed by the department chair, and should be presented to the employee by their supervisor. The letter requires the employee's signature to indicate acceptance of the offer of appointment.

Prior to the employee's appointment start date or immediately following, submit the signed offer of appointment letter and the Personal Data Salary Authorization (PD) form to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu).

## **PROMOTIONS**

Research Associates who have a minimum of three years of post-terminal degree research experience may be nominated for promotion to Senior Research Associate. Promotions will be based on the candidate's record of performance, the satisfaction of eligibility requirements, and their ability to fulfill the expectations of the new position. Promotion requests may be made at any time during the year and will be effective the first of the month following approval. Supervisors should not delay a request for reappointment offer if they intend to promote the Research Associate. Inquiries regarding this should be sent to SOM HR at [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu). The department should consider a significant salary increase to match the new responsibilities.

Promotion requests of Senior Research Associate to Research Scientist will be considered based on increased responsibilities, including the expectation to write, submit, and serve as the PI on grants. All Research Scientist requests will be subject to review and approval by the Vice Dean for Research on behalf of the Dean.

To initiate a promotion request, the department administrator should submit a Promotion Request through the

online RA/SRA/RS Appointment system, [Promotion Request Submission Link: RA/SRA/RS](#). The following documents will be required for review and consideration of the promotion: 1) justification for the promotion; 2) new job description or current job description with new roles and responsibilities highlighted; 3) the individual's current CV (must include the individual's current position); and, if applicable, 4) an annual activity form if the promotion is proposed at or near the time of the individual's current reappointment date. If a Visa renewal is applicable and needed at that time, send Visa renewal application documents to [SOMVisa@case.edu](mailto:SOMVisa@case.edu). The renewal request will be reviewed by SOM Human Resources and the RA/SRA/RS Review Committee. Renewal requests with significant salary increase requests or non-grant funding may be subject to review by the Office of Finance and Planning.

Once all approvals have been secured, SOM HR will send the department administrator the notification of approval and the promotion/appointment offer letter. The department administrator should review the letter and contact SOM HR if any revisions are necessary. Once finalized, the letter must be printed on letterhead and signed by the department chair, and should be presented to the employee by their supervisor. The letter requires the employee's signature to indicate acceptance of the offer of promotion/appointment.

Prior to the employee's appointment start date or immediately following, submit the signed offer of appointment letter and the Personal Data Salary Authorization (PD) form to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu).

### **NEW HIRE ORIENTATION**

New appointees are considered to be within an orientation period for their first three months. During this time, the supervisor should assess the employee's performance and determine if their performance is satisfactory. Orientation reviews should be conducted with the employee at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months, using the CWRU Orientation Review form.

Department administrators should email the completed and signed Orientation Period Review form to SOM HR. Prior to the employee's 3-month anniversary of employment, the supervisor should either decide to continue employment or request that the employee be terminated. In the event that additional time is needed to assess the individual's performance, contact the SOM HR before the end of the 3-month orientation period to discuss extending the orientation period to 120 days. Extensions must be approved by SOM HR prior to the supervisor communicating the extension with the employee.

### **NON-REAPPOINTMENT/TERMINATION**

A PI/Supervisor must receive SOM HR's consent before notifying the Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, or Research Scientist of non-renewal or termination of their current appointment. If the supervisor has decided to not renew a current appointment, they or the department administrator should notify SOM HR a minimum of 60 days prior to the appointment end date so that the individual can be provided with a minimum 45-day notification period. SOM HR will provide the department administrator with the notification of nonrenewal letter to be signed by the supervisor and presented to the employee at least 45 days prior to the end date of their current appointment. To complete the process, the department administrator should email the following materials to [SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu](mailto:SOMRA-SRA-RS@case.edu): 1) the non-renewal notification letter; 2) Personnel Action Form (PAF), and 3) PD.

If a department proposes to terminate an appointment prior to the planned end date due to loss of funding, the department must follow CWRU's reorganization request process. Contact SOM HR to initiate this process at least 90 days prior to the proposed termination date or as soon as possible.

If a department proposes to end an appointment prior to the planned end date due to unacceptable performance, the department must follow CWRU's positive corrective action process. Contact SOM HR to initiate this process. The supervisor should begin gathering documentation to support termination.