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**Research Associate and Senior Research Associate  
Policy and Procedure**

**PURPOSE**

Research Associates (RA) and Senior Research Associate (SRA) positions are staff positions managed by the school's HR officer within the Office of Finance & Administration. RAs and SRAs work with a high degree of independence carrying out, managing or leading research, training or consulting projects. Senior Research Associates require additional experience and supervise research assistants and other staff, teach or instruct others in research techniques, and author or co-author reports and articles on research findings. Research Associates may submit proposals under their own name as Principal Investigator (PI) while it is expected that Senior Research Associates will submit proposals under their own name as PI.

It is expected that Research Associate and Senior Research Associate positions are fully funded on CWRU grants and serve in CWRU-funded research roles.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Research Associate (RA)

- Earned Master's level degree in their field. This may include (but is not limited to) MSSA, MSW, MNO, MPH, MPA, MA.
- Licensure may be preferred or required.
- Relevant technical, research and managerial skills at a level meeting or exceeding the requirements of a Research Assistant 4.

Senior Research Associate (SRA)

- Earned Ph.D., MD, or other terminal doctoral degree.
- Minimum of 5 years of experience in research, evaluation, consulting, or relevant field. Experience must include management and/or leadership in positions.

**COMPENSATION**

RA and SRA salaries will be set according to the following criteria: 1) number of years of relevant experience, 2) authority over projects, 3) expertise or influence in field, 4) specialized technical skills, and 5) degree beyond Master's level (this final criterion only applies to the RA position).

Initial salaries:

Type	Education/Experience	Minimum Starting Salary
RA	Master's Degree	\$52,000
SRA	Ph.D. with minimum of 5 years of experience	\$65,000

The salary model spreadsheet will be used to determine the starting salary offer for a new employee.

Salaries are subject to annual merit increases like other university positions. (See <https://case.edu/hr/compensation/salary/salary-structure>) for more information.

Starting salary recommendations will be reviewed on an on-going basis and may be adjusted as needed to meet market needs and ensure equity.

### **NEW APPOINTMENTS**

Prior to posting or otherwise advertising the position, a supervisor must submit the following items to MSASS HR:

1. A job description that describes the research project(s) and expectations of the position.
2. The required or preferred skills, experience, expertise, and education to effectively meet or exceed the expectations of the position.
3. The criteria ratings (listed in Compensation section above) required to complete the salary model spreadsheet.
  - a. Note that a final salary offer can only be determined once a candidate has been selected. If no candidate has been identified, only a salary range can be determined.

MSASS HR will review the request with MSASS Research Administration to confirm funding. Positions may not be approved if funding in-hand is less than the position's likely full annual salary and fringe.

Once approved by MSASS HR, the department administrator or supervisor will be informed and invited to post the position. All positions must be posted for a minimum of 5 days on the CWRU academic careers website (<https://case.edu/academic-careers/>). Email a word doc with your posting to [AskHR@case.edu](mailto:AskHR@case.edu) and cc MSASS Director of HR ([joanie.berger@case.edu](mailto:joanie.berger@case.edu)) to post the position. Broader distribution is encouraged but not required.

All qualified applicants must be considered for the position and all internal candidates who meet the minimum qualifications must be interviewed. Interviews should follow university fair hiring practices.

Once a candidate has been selected, the supervisor must submit the candidate's CV (with full details regarding months and years of employment and whether positions were full-time or part-time), cover letter, and completed reference checks to MSASS HR. MSASS HR and the supervisor will review the model salary spreadsheet together to determine a salary offer. Upon agreement, MSASS HR will email the candidate with the salary offer and other information related to working at CWRU (e.g., explanation of health benefits).

Upon acceptance by the candidate, MSASS HR will email a formal appointment letter to the candidate for signature, along with instructions to complete CWRU employment requirements. The letter requires the employee's signature to indicate acceptance of the appointment. The new employee will need to fill out new hire paperwork on their first day of employment in central HR and required to attend a New Hire Orientation on the first Monday of employment. To both, they must bring their signed offer letter.

Appointments are no longer than 12 months, from each July 1 through June 30. A hire made during a fiscal year will end the next June 30. RA/SRA appointment letters are signed only by the Associate Dean of Finance & Administration and can only be issued by Finance & Administration.

All staff new to their position work in an orientation period for their first 3 months. Sick and vacation time accrue during the orientation period but are not available to take until after the 90-day orientation period. Supervisors are responsible for developing a start-up plan that includes job training and performance counseling during those three months. Supervisors are also responsible for completing an orientation evaluation around day 30, 60 and 90 and recommending whether to continue employment, extend the orientation period or sever the employment relationship. See <https://case.edu/finadmin/humres/policies/employment/eop.html> for more details.

## **REAPPOINTMENTS**

Supervisors are required to provide RAs and SRAs with a written annual performance review at the end of each academic year (May/June).

Salaries are subject to annual merit-based increases at the time of the performance review at the same levels as university staff if project funding can support it.

Re-appointment letters will be generated by Finance & Administration once the annual performance review and suggested salary are returned by the supervisor or department administrator and approved. The letter requires the employee's signature to indicate acceptance of the offer of reappointment.

## **ADDITIONAL PAY**

Short term projects may be compensated as additional pay if the work is for a different department or supervisor, the work is short-term and unrelated to their regular scope of duties, the work occurs outside normal business hours, and does not interfere with their primary day-to-day job. Additional pay requests need to be submitted to the school's HR officer *prior* to the

scheduled work assignment. Use the university's Additional Pay Request Form, and include the employee's name, current supervisor and department, the proposed project and duties, project manager and proposed payment amount with a justification of that amount. The Mandel School HR officer will review the project, pay and payment method. Employee may begin work once the additional pay request is approved by HR. It is the employee's responsibility to discuss the additional work with the current supervisor and ensure that it does not interfere with their regular, primary job.

## **EQUITY REVIEWS**

If an employee's salary appears low compared to others doing the same or similar work, the supervisor or employee can request an equity review. Equity reviews consider the scope of position, years of experience, degrees and licensures, and performance evaluations of the employee to determine if current pay is equitable compared to their peers at the Mandel School. Any resulting equity increases are contingent on funding availability.

For an employee to initiate an equity review request, they must first speak with their supervisor. If the supervisor does **not** believe there is an equity issue, they should communicate this to the employee. The employee then has the option to contact the Mandel School HR officer directly to request an equity review. The employee must identify specific reasons for the review.

Regardless of who initiates the review, Mandel School HR will discuss the results with the supervisor to determine if an equity increase is recommended and how much. Any resulting equity increase is contingent on supervisor approval and funding availability.

To request a review, the supervisor or employee completes the Mandel School RA/SRA Equity Review of Salary Request and submits the completed, signed form to the Center Director for approval before sending it to Mandel HR for review, with the employee's job description and resume or CV. A detailed explanation or justification must be included. Incomplete forms will be returned.

Any equity-based salary increase request of 5% or lower will be evaluated by Mandel School HR. Requests above 5% will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Dean of the Mandel School, the Associate Dean for Research and Training, and the Associate Dean of Finance and Administration.

Decisions will be communicated to the requestor via email. In the event of a salary increase, Finance & Administration will create a revised appointment letter for the employee's signature, effective the first of the following month.

Employees must have been employed in their current job for a minimum of twelve (12) months, their most recent performance review must be "Successful" or above and they must be in good standing (i.e. not have been placed in *Positive Corrective Action (PCA)* within the last year) to be eligible for an equity review.

## PROMOTIONS

Research Associates who have been in their position at least a year, have obtained Ph.D., MD, or other terminal doctoral degree and have a minimum of five years of experience and fulfill the expectations of a Senior Research Associate, may be nominated for promotion to Senior Research Associate. Promotions will be based on the satisfaction of eligibility requirements, the candidate's record of performance, and their ability to fulfill the expectations of the new position. A promotion request may be made at any time during the year and will be effective the first of the month following approval.

To initiate a promotion, the supervisor or the department administrator should email the request to MSASS HR and include a justification for the promotion, new job description, the individual's CV, and requested salary and confirmation of funding. MSASS HR will review the materials and, if the promotion is approved, a new appointment letter will be generated and sent to the supervisor and/or department administrator for approval before sending it to the candidate. Salary increases will generally follow standard university promotion guidelines.

Research Associates in their position for over a year, who have taken on significant additional responsibilities but are not eligible for a Senior Research Associate position, may be considered for advancement in their position (in-line promotion). To initiate an advancement request, the supervisor or department administrator should email the request to MSASS HR and include a justification for an in-line promotion based on significantly increased responsibilities (following the criteria definitions, e.g., authority over projects), new job description, the individual's CV, and a confirmation of available funding. MSASS HR will review the materials and, if a promotion is approved, a new appointment letter will be generated and sent to the supervisor and/or department administrator for approval before sending it to the candidate. Any accompanying salary increase will follow university salary increase guidelines.

## SICK and VACATION TIME

Research Associates are exempt staff and benefits accrue at rates consistent with benefit categories 2 and 3. Vacation time is accrued at 10.67 hours per month (16 days a year), 0-5 years employment. At five years employment, vacation time is accrued at 14 hours per month (21 days a year). Sick time is awarded annually, on one's anniversary date, and is 5, 10, or 15 days per year depending on years of service. *For more information on university sick and vacation policies, see <https://case.edu/hr/hr-policies/staff-hr-policies/time-away-cwru>.*

Senior Research Associates are exempt executive-level staff and benefits accrue at rates consistent with benefit categories 0 and 1. Vacation time, regardless of years in position, accrues at 14 hours per month (21 days a year). Sick time is awarded annually, on one's anniversary date. The amount varies depending on years of service, accrued at a rate between 1 2/3 days per month worked and six months total per year. *For more information on university sick and vacation policies, see <https://case.edu/hr/hr-policies/staff-hr-policies/time-away-cwru>.*

Vacation time needs to be pre-approved by the supervisor and recorded in HCM prior to the end of each month. Sick time must also be recorded in HCM prior to the end of each month. All time

must be approved monthly by supervisor in HCM. Research and Senior Research Associates on modified schedules (.5 FTE, .75 FTE, etc.) accrue vacation at a proportionally reduced rate. Any vacation rolled over to the following year will also be prorated proportionally.

## **NON-REAPPOINTMENT, TERMINATION**

A supervisor must receive MSASS HR's consent before terminating or not renewing a current appointment. If the department proposes to let an appointment lapse at the end of a current appointment period, it should notify MSASS HR a minimum of 60 days prior to the appointment end date so that the individual can be provided with a minimum 45-day notice. MSASS HR will provide the department with the text of the letter that must be used to notify the employee of non-appointment. The signed letter must be presented to the employee at least 45 days prior to the end date. RA/SRA non-renewal letters are signed only by the Associate Dean of Finance & Administration and can only be issued by Finance & Administration. To complete the process, the department administrator or supervisor should email to MSASS HR: 1) the signed non-renewal notification letter, and 2) Personnel Action Form (PAF).

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

If a department proposes to end an appointment due to unacceptable performance, the department must follow the university's positive corrective action process. Contact MSASS HR to initiate this process. The supervisor will be asked for documentation to support the termination request.