

Campus Administrative Policy

Policy Title: Research Assistant/Associate (PRA)

Policy Number: 4025 Functional Area: Human Resources

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Applies to: CU Anschutz Medical Campus
CU Denver Campus

A. Introduction

The research associate series of faculty titles was established by the Board of Regents to recognize the role of faculty members whose primary duties are to conduct research activities of the University of Colorado. This policy documents the basic human resource tenets for the research associate title series and should serve as a guide for the proper administration of these positions.

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C. Purpose

These guidelines apply to employees with appointments in the research associate series of positions. It is the responsibility of the dean of each school to ensure compliance with the provisions of this policy.

Research Associate Series is a set of faculty research titles used for faculty members whose primary duties are to conduct research and are not significantly involved in instruction and departmental administrative duties. The titles in this series are Professional Research Assistant, Senior Professional Research Assistant, Research Associate, and Senior Research Associate. These titles are not eligible for tenure and faculty members in this series are at-will employees. Positions in the research associate series must not be supported from general funds except as

noted in Section E.3 and must be appointed by a primary academic unit as noted in Section E.2.

D. Definitions

1. *Primary unit* refers to the Schools and Colleges of the University of Colorado Denver Campus and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.
2. *Academic units* are entities that conduct the instructional and research missions of CU Denver Campus and CU Anschutz Medical Campus. The majority of the academic units are within a primary unit; however, some may exist independent of a primary unit such as an independent center, an institute, or a unit of Academic Affairs.
3. *Clinical work duties* refer to responsibilities that are performed solely for the purpose of providing a patient with clinical care services.
4. *Clinical research work duties* refer to clinical or patient care responsibilities that are performed for the purpose of conducting research.
5. *Project clerical duties* are performed specifically for a particular sponsored program such as ordering and receiving laboratory supplies to be used for a project on which the employee, with a research associate title, is working and reviewing expenditures to ensure they are allocable to a particular sponsored program on which the employee, with a research associate title, is working.
6. *Instructional work duties* refer to responsibilities for training or teaching students who are enrolled in a degree-granting program of CU Denver Campus or CU Anschutz Medical Campus.
7. *Research work duties* refer to those activities necessary to conduct a particular research protocol as outlined in the Duties and Responsibilities for Research Assistant/Associate (See Attachment Below)

8. *Salary Band* refers to a minimum and maximum salary established for a particular job title.
9. *Salary Range* is the minimum and maximum salary that is assigned to a particular job description. The salary range for a particular position is within the span of the minimum and maximum salary band for a specific job title.

E. Appointments

1. Reporting Relationship(s)

Positions in the research associate series must have a direct reporting relationship to a position with a faculty title that is at least one rank higher than the particular research associate position. For example, a professional research assistant may report to a research associate. In general, research associate positions are expected to report to a Principal Investigator.

2. Academic Appointment

A primary unit must sponsor faculty appointments to the research associate series. Research Associate positions may work in academic units that are not a primary unit; however, a primary unit must sponsor the appointment. The research associate position should reside in the same unit as the Principal Investigator who is responsible for the research conducted by the research associate position. Under Colorado law, faculty members who are appointed to ranks within the research associate series are at-will employees. The research associate series of positions are not eligible for tenure.

3. Source of Funding for Position

Individuals appointed to the research associate series of titles must not be compensated from General Funds. General Funds are amounts appropriated by the State of Colorado that originate from state tax revenues, tuition and fees, and facilities and administration cost recovery. The deans may approve a temporary

exception for extraordinary financial circumstances.

4. Student Status

An employee in the research associate series may be enrolled as a student in a degree program. Current employees in this series are subject to the regular academic admissions process and current students applying for positions in the series are subject to the campus search process.

5. Minimum Educational and Experience Requirements

- a. Professional research assistants must have a Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience as determined by the dean or their designee.
- b. Senior professional research assistants must have a Master's degree or equivalent experience as determined by the dean or their designee.
- c. Research associates must have Doctoral degree or its equivalent as determined by the dean or their designee.
- d. Senior research associates must have a Doctor's degree or its equivalent as determined by the dean or their designee.

F. Job Description and Assignment of Duties

1. Professional research assistant duties would pertain to an individual possessing competence to carry out research or scholarly work of a quality comparable to that produced by a graduate student research assistant. A professional research assistant works in a collaborative role with the principal investigator and contributes substantially to the investigation and analysis of the project. As a collaborator on the project, the professional research assistant may receive full credit as a co-author of publications and technical reports. No more than 25 percent of the duties or effort may be classified as clinical, instructional, and/or project clerical duties.
2. Senior professional research assistant duties include carrying out research or scholarly work of a quality and scope similar to that of an

advanced graduate student research assistant. Appointment to this title is regarded as a promotion or recognition of duties and performance above the rank of professional research assistant. No more than 25 percent of the duties or effort may be classified as clinical, instructional, and/or project clerical duties.

3. Research associates are assigned duties comparable to those of the regular faculty ranks of assistant professor or associate professor. No more than 25 percent of the duties or effort may be classified as clinical, instructional, and/or project clerical duties.
4. Senior research associates are assigned duties comparable to those of a regular faculty rank of professor. Appointment to this title is regarded as recognition by the University of an Outstanding Researcher in their field and should be considered a promotion or recognition of duties and performance above the rank of research associate. No more than 25 percent of the duties or effort may be classified as clinical, instructional, and/or project clerical duties.
5. Significant Changes in Status

The primary unit must document significant changes in the status of a position during the course of an academic year by updating its appointment records. Significant changes include major adjustments or changes in job duties and any increase or decrease in percent of full time appointment that impacts eligibility for the faculty benefits program.

G. Compensation

1. Salary setting

The campus salary bands for the research associate series are posted on the Human Resources website annually. If the band does not accommodate the requested salary, the dean or their designee may approve an exception based on special considerations that are documented in the job description and/or documented qualifications of the candidate such as education, skills,

experience, or exceptional performance. The salary bands will be reviewed and updated annually.

2. Basis of Pay

Faculty members in the research associate series are compensated on a salaried basis. The full-time salary should be prorated for any reduction in appointment that is less than full time. Research associate positions, as are all other faculty positions, are by definition exempt from overtime status as prescribed by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Thus, these positions are salaried and may not receive pay based on hours worked.

3. Performance Evaluations

All employees in the research associate series must receive a performance evaluation annually. The performance evaluation format used by a unit must be consistently applied to all research associate positions within an academic unit. Employees in the research associate series must not receive a salary increase or promotion without an annual performance evaluation. The performance rate form is required by [CU System Administrative Policy Statement \(APS\) 5008, Faculty Performance Evaluation](#), and should be completed for all professional research associate positions in addition to the annual performance evaluation. Evaluation forms are available on the Human Resources website.

4. Annual Salary Setting Process

The annual salary setting process is governed by the Faculty Compensation Plan. The annual salary recommendations are reviewed and approved by the pertinent dean prior to submission to the Chancellor.

5. Mid-Year Salary Changes

The salary setting process takes place twice per academic year. The salary set for the academic year may not be adjusted outside

the salary setting process except for unusual circumstances. Sponsored program funds received during the course of an academic year (grants, contracts, or gifts) normally may not be used to increase the academic year salary of an employee in the research associate series. In rare and infrequent circumstances, an incumbent's job duties may change substantially during the course of an academic year. In these unusual circumstances, an adjustment can only be made based on a major change that is documented in a new job description that is approved first by the unit head and then by the dean or their designee. Salary changes that are proportional to a change to the percent of time do not require approval outside the school.

6. Benefits

Individuals with an appointment in the research associate series are eligible to participate in the University of Colorado benefits programs as stated on the [benefits eligibility matrix](#). University of Colorado benefits programs include retirement, insurance plans, and leave benefits. The salaried portion of an individual's compensation cannot be positively or negatively influenced by an individual employee's level of participation in the University of Colorado benefit programs. For example, an employee cannot be offered a higher salary if they refuse participation in a University health benefit plan.

7. Additional Pay, Benefits or Perquisites

Research associate positions, as are all other faculty positions, are by definition exempt from overtime status as prescribed by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Thus, these positions are salaried and may not receive pay based on hours worked. A matrix for permitted and prohibited types of additional pay is provided in section K.

8. Payment Period

All compensation must be processed through the University's payroll system in order to assure compliance with the withholdings

requirements of the Internal Revenue Service. Positions in the research associate series will normally receive all compensation payments as part of the regularly scheduled monthly payroll cycle.

9. Recognition Awards

Faculty members in the research associate series may receive monetary awards from the University for Outstanding Achievement and performance. The awards must be granted as a result of a formal, documented process.

10. Honoraria Paid by the University of Colorado

Honoraria, paid by the University of Colorado, is a payment for service that is intended to express appreciation for a one-time performance or lecture provided outside of a faculty member's school and when such service is in addition to their normal workload. Honoraria are permitted only when the activity is not ongoing. Honoraria payments to a faculty member should be nominal in amount and are intended to be a token of appreciation rather than a payment for the services rendered. It should be noted that many external sponsors have policies that specifically prohibit these payments from sponsored program activities; therefore, care should be taken to ensure compliance with the sponsor's policies for allowing honoraria payments to be made from sponsored program funding.

11. Additional Pay from Outside Sources

The research associate series may receive outside pay under the provisions of the 1/6th rule while on leave without pay, or, for academic year faculty, summer vacation periods. Pay from outside sources must be disclosed to the immediate supervisor. Research Associate positions, as faculty members, must comply with [APS 5012 on Conflict of Interest](#) and [APS 1044, Faculty Consulting and External Professional Activities](#). Furthermore, no employee shall derive private gain from their association with the University except

as provided by the APS for Conflict of Interest and [APS 1013, Intellectual Property Policy on Discoveries and Patents for Their Protection and Commercialization.](#)

12. Moving Allowances

Faculty members may receive a moving allowance only as a part of their appointment to the University of Colorado. Moving allowances *must* be granted in conformance with the [Campus Policy 2012, Fiscal Policy for Moving and Relocation Expense Reimbursement.](#)

13. Service

Service during the academic year to other departments, schools, campus committees or organizations, or participation in University activities are examples of activities all faculty members should expect to undertake without additional compensation as part of their service obligation to the University. Service that includes significant leadership or supervisory responsibility may be eligible for additional compensation when it is not a regular and ongoing component of a faculty member's workload. Advance approval by the dean is required prior to making commitments for such compensation.

H. Termination

Ranks within the research associate series are not eligible for tenure and employees in these ranks are at-will employees. Termination occurs when an employee in a research associate position separates employment or retires from the University. When an employee terminates from their research associate position, the University will make payment to the employee for any documented vacation time that is earned but has not been used. If an employee in the research associate ranks is transferring from one unit of the University to another, they are not considered to have terminated employment with the University and documented vacation and sick leave balances must be transferred to the new unit. Transferring employees or employees on short work breaks should not receive compensation for unused vacation or sick leave balances. Academic

units must receive Human Resources Office approval before terminating the employment of an employee in the Research Associate series.

I. Records and Files

The official personnel file for positions in the research associate series resides in the school or Human Resources. All personnel actions (revised job descriptions, performance evaluations, pay changes, etc.) must be documented and filed in the official personnel file.

J. Employment Issues

Faculty members in the research associate series who wish to request review of an employment issue should first inquire with their immediate supervisor and the appropriate unit administrative personnel. The faculty member should state the specific nature of the issue, provide relevant background information, and request a specific remedy. If the issue cannot be resolved at this first level, the faculty member should prepare a written letter with the same information and include an explanation of why the issue was not satisfactorily resolved. The second request should be addressed to the next level of authority for the unit (usually the department chair) and their unit administrator. The next level of authority will conduct a review and respond in writing within 30 days. If the issue cannot be resolved at the first or second level, the matter may be referred to the respective dean's office. The dean's office will conduct a review and respond to the employee in writing within 30 days. Either party may request an extension of this response deadline for the second and final level of review.

K. Permitted and Prohibited Types of Additional Pay

Reason for Additional Remuneration	Paid as hourly amount?	Paid as a flat amount for the	Paid as a flat monthly amount? (2)
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On-call pay for laboratory coverage outside of normal working hours	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)
Laboratory or technical work provided to a sponsored project on which the PRA does not normally work	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)
Participation in the simulated patient educational exercise	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)	Not Permitted
Helping a principal investigator for whom the research associate position does not normally perform services write or prepare a proposal	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)
Performance of services outside of normal work responsibilities for the sponsored program on which the research associate position is normally assigned	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
Award or honor	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as Additional Pay)	Not Permitted
Additional pay for coverage or work that is in addition to normal working hours or expected productivity	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Not Permitted

Temporary performance of <i>significant</i> additional job duties that are in addition to the normal work responsibilities for the sponsored program on which the research associate position is normally assigned	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Permitted (Process as a Temporary Stipend)
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1. The amount paid must be based on an agreed amount of compensation for the completion of a discreetly defined piece of work or the delivery of a work product. The actual amount paid is for the work delivered and is not based on actual hours required to accomplish the work.

2. The flat monthly amount must be agreed to in advance and cannot vary depending on the number of additional hours worked.

Notes

- Dates of official enactment and amendments:
HSC Administrative Policy Chapter 5, Policy 8 previously adopted September 1, 2005: Adopted and replaced HSC Administrative Policy Chapter 5, Policy 8
January 16, 2019: Modified
July 1, 2019: Revised
- History:
September 1, 2005: Adopted and replaced HSC Administrative Policy Chapter 5, Policy January 16, 2019: Modified to reflect a Campus-wide effort to recast and revitalize various Campus policy sites into a standardized and more coherent set of chaptered policy statements organized around the several operational divisions of the university.
July 1, 2019: Reviewed as part of the spring 2019 semi-annual review process. Policy was expanded to include both campuses, minor updates made.

3. Initial Policy Effective Date: September 1, 2005
4. Cross References/Appendix:
 - APS 5008, Performance Ratings for Faculty
 - Benefits Eligibility Matrix
 - Procedures Guide – Additional Pay
 - [APS 5012, Conflict of Interest](#)
 - APS 1013, Intellectual Property Policy on Discoveries and Patents for Their Protection and Commercialization
 - Campus Policy 2012, Fiscal Policy for Moving and Relocation Expense Reimbursement.
 - [Campus Policy 3058, Relocation Services Guidelines](#)