

Research Staff Positions

Western Michigan University

To meet specific externally funded project needs, Western Michigan University (“University”) establishes positions designed to attract and retain highly competent and prominent researchers. The people holding such positions are known as **research staff**.

Governance

Research staff do not participate in governance at the department, college, or University levels.

Period of Appointment and Renewals

All personnel actions, including recommendations for appointment, renewal, promotion, or salary increment, shall be initiated by the principal investigator.

Initial appointments can be made at any level, depending on qualifications, and all appointments require the approval of the unit chair/director, the dean(s) of the cognizant college(s), and the vice president for research. Research staff appointments are made for a specific period of time, usually at least one year.

All research staff go through a six-month probation period immediately after starting a new job, whether as a new University employee or as a current employee who moves to a new position by promotion, transfer, or demotion. Probation is a working test period and also provides an opportunity for employees to learn their new jobs and related duties and responsibilities. During probation, the University may release the employee with or without cause, and with or without notice, at the University’s sole discretion.

Renewals are contingent upon (1) the grant or contract being in effect, (2) the availability of external funds to support the research and compensation of the research staff, and (3) satisfactory performance as determined by a periodic (at least annual) review of performance by the director(s) and/or administrator(s) of the academic or research unit(s) where an appointment is held.

Research staff positions cannot be converted into faculty positions within the University. Research staff may, however, apply as external candidates for vacant faculty and staff appointments in the University. Such a move will require a new appointment.

Period of Notice

Research staff appointments are terminal appointments conterminous with the period of the sponsored project, and there is no University obligation for continuation. In the event that a grant or contract must terminate earlier than the original termination date announced in the agreement, research staff will be given as much notice as possible, but specific notice is dependent on notification from the funding agency to the University.

Source of Funding

Compensation, benefits, and research support expenses for research staff are funded by external sources with any individual exceptions approved by the vice president for research. In very rare instances approved by the vice president for research, research staff may be funded from University sources.

Compensation

The amount of compensation is established at the time of appointment and is governed by the guiding principles of the University's compensation program. All research staff positions are assigned an "R" grade and appropriate pay range. The grade is determined based on the job's content, not the capabilities of individual employees.

The fiscal year (12 month) pay schedule for research staff positions is as follows:

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Midrange</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Principal research associate (R1)	\$62,606	\$73,249 - \$89,527	\$100,170
Senior research associate (R2)	\$47,367	\$55,419 - \$67,734	\$75,787
Research associate (R3)	\$37,373	\$42,045 - \$51,388	\$56,060
Emeritus researcher (R4)	Negotiated with sponsoring agency		

New hires should be hired at a pay rate between the grade minimum and the lower end of the "R" grade's midrange. A proposed starting rate within the grade midrange must be reviewed with HR Services prior to making an offer. A starting pay rate above the midrange requires prior approval of the vice president for research.

The hiring agent must contact HR Services to discuss appropriate placement of an employee who promotes or transfers to a new position. Exceptions to Human Resources' recommendations regarding the pay rate of an employee transferring to a new position must have prior approval of the vice president for research.

Increments in compensation will be across the board, based on non-bargaining percentage increases when available and subject to the sponsor's willingness to pay. In the event the monies for increments are not provided by the sponsor, compensation will not be increased. Individuals shall be notified in writing at the time of hire regarding the conditions attached to the availability of increments in compensation. Increments shall be effective on July 1 or as permitted by the sponsoring agreement.

Any compensation increases that are above and beyond the across the board increments must be approved by the vice president for research prior to the increase. In the event monies for the increase are not provided by the sponsor, compensation will not be increased.

Benefits

Benefits for principal and senior associates (R1 and R2) will be the same as those for professional/administrative staff. A .50 FTE is the minimum for benefits eligibility excluding retirement plan participation and tuition remission and a .69 FTE is the threshold for full benefits eligibility.

Research associates (R3) will follow the same leave and absences from work policy as provided to clerical-technical staff. In addition, they will receive a Bronco Identification Card, parking permit, and health insurance. Research associates are not eligible for (1) life insurance, (2) disability insurance, (3) the University's retirement plan, (4) University-paid health insurance upon retirement, (5) University retiree status, or (6) payoff of sick leave upon termination of appointment. Annual leave must be used before the appointment terminates. To be benefits-eligible, a singular research associate (R3) position must be .50 FTE or greater.

Benefits for a R4 emeritus researcher are by virtue of their retirement from another position at the University. They will receive a Bronco Identification Card and parking permit.

Grievances

The University recognizes that in any work situation some employee/supervisor differences are inevitable. University policy assures employees of their right to file a formal grievance without fear of reprisal or censure. Section II of the *Human Resources Policies/Procedures Manual* elaborates University policy on grievances.

Criteria and Procedures for Appointment

Research staff may be appointed in an academic or research unit. Available positions must follow Human Resources' policies for posting. Recruiting and appointment procedures must comply with all University policies. Application materials should include a complete resume with a list of publications or other scholarly works, evidence of research ability, and letters of recommendation from recognized individuals in the candidate's field of expertise. Appointments must be approved by the dean(s) of the cognizant college(s) (when appropriate), the vice president for research, and the Office of Institutional Equity prior to an offer being extended to a candidate.

A research staff position shall not exceed 1.0 FTE, nor shall an employee holding a research staff position simultaneously hold appointment in another employee group. A research staff employee may hold multiple research staff positions as long as the FTE does not exceed 1.0. However, benefits eligibility is determined upon the FTE of a singular appointment.

The promotion criteria and process for research staff positions will be defined by the vice president for research. Criteria will include excellence in research as demonstrated by success in securing external funding; the ability to initiate, conduct, complete and disseminate high-quality, innovative and creative research; the ability to influence public policy in the professional area of specialization; expertise in the discipline as evidenced by peer review of research; and contributions to the research community as evidenced by refereed publications, inventions, or other documentation of research quality. Research staff may apply for consideration for promotion after three years at the current level. Application shall be made to the unit director. Approval by the dean(s) of the cognizant college(s) and the vice president for research shall be required.

Descriptions of Grades

The following functions and knowledge base descriptions of each of the grades encompass the broad range of positions and types of sponsoring agreements that fund these research staff. Individuals that hold these positions may not necessarily perform all of these functions within the scope of the sponsoring agreement. The lists are, however, useful in differentiating between the grades. Research staff are ineligible to apply for internal research program funds.

Principal Research Associate (R1)

Functions

- Designs, develops and executes/directs empirical research projects, including the design and development of the appropriate research protocols and selection of appropriate analytical and statistical techniques for analysis and evaluation of research outcomes.
- Selects or interprets research questions/topics within the scope of the sponsoring agreement as well as contribution to the discipline.
- Develops theoretical framework of the project and/or constructs appropriate hypothesis.
- Identifies relevant subject populations for investigation and selects appropriate sampling techniques.
- Designs and develops research proposals and contract bids for submission to potential sponsors/clients, competes for research funds regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Ensures that all projects comply with all scientific and ethical requirements.
- Authors manuscripts, journal articles and reports for publication, and may serve as a reviewer or evaluator for professional and academic journals. Presents research findings at professional conferences and meetings.
- Administers project budgets, hires subordinate staff, and may supervise other staff or students on grant-related projects.
- Coordinates project aspects with outside entities both nationally and internationally.

Knowledge/Skills

- Possession of an earned terminal degree in discipline/field of specialization combined with significant years of progressively responsible research experience and a substantial record of professional publication.
- An established reputation as a researcher and national and/or international recognition as a scholar is required.

Senior Research Associate (R2)

Functions

Designs, administers, implements and evaluates research projects as specified in the grant or contract proposal.

- Responsible for clinical, technical or engineering aspects of the project.
- Monitors daily operation of research programs/projects, including supervision of subordinate personnel.
- Identifies new or prospective sponsors and funding opportunities and drafts proposals for new/renewed research funding.
- Selects and applies appropriate quantitative, statistical, and qualitative methods for analysis and interpretation of data.
- Ensures that research projects comply with scientific and ethical requirements, the reporting requirements, budgets and time tables specified in the grant.
- May present at conferences/meetings in the relevant field.
- Coordinates with other groups in the project both at WMU and externally.
- Establishes/maintains contact with researchers outside the University involved in similar projects.
- Writes technical reports and manuscripts for publication or reports to the sponsoring agency.

Knowledge/Skills

- Possession of an earned terminal degree in a relevant field/discipline or a demonstrated equivalent specialization that is essential in conducting research combined with previous research experience is required.
- Knowledge of the research process, evaluation methods, analytical and statistical methods, and relevant computer skills are required.
- Has clinical, laboratory, training or field skills appropriate to the grant or contract.

Research Associate (R3)

A research associate is by its nature a training position. Individuals appointed as research associates will have had limited or no professional employment prior to the appointment. It is expected that a research associate will not be appointed for a period that exceeds three (3) years either in a single appointment or by three (3) consecutive one-year appointments.

Functions

- Implements research projects as specified in the grant or contract proposal.
- Applies appropriate quantitative, statistical, and qualitative methods for analysis and interpretation of data.
- Drafts manuscripts for submission to professional and/or scientific journals or reports to the sponsoring agency.
- May present at conferences/meetings in the relevant field.
- Applies for external funding as principal investigator and other grants as Co-Principal Investigator.

Knowledge/Skills

- Possession of an earned terminal degree in a relevant field/discipline or evidence of one of these degrees being awarded within the first three months after appointment.

Emeritus Researcher (R4)

For individuals who have retired from the University but who wish to continue to conduct research through externally funded projects.

Conclusion

In instances where policies and procedures are not addressed in this document, research staff are subject to those published in the *Employee Handbook* for non-bargaining-unit employees.