Rice University Policy No. 438

RESEARCH POSITIONS

I. General Policy

RESEARCH SUPPORT POSITIONS

Rice University appoints persons to Postdoctoral positions and employs others in several staff positions to provide support for its various research programs. In order to provide structure and assure compliance with federal and state employment legislation, research positions are separated into two categories, each containing specific titles and conditions of employment. The two categories are Postdoctoral and staff. (The title of Visiting Scholar is an exception, and while not considered a Postdoctoral, has characteristics similar to that category. See below.) Titles and salary levels are determined by the hiring departments in conjunction with the Human Resources Department.

POSTDOCTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Postdoctoral appointments are usually characterized by some or all of the following conditions:

• The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g. Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field and
• the appointment is temporary
• the appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship
• the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career
• the appointee works under the supervision of a faculty member
• the appointee has the freedom and is expected to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment
• all postdoctoral and visiting scholar appointments are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act
• the appointments are processed through the appropriate academic deans and Human Resources.

There are two types of Postdoctoral appointments:

(1) POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW. The title of Postdoctoral Fellow is reserved for those who meet the following conditions:

• External support awarded by an agency such as the NIH
• the fellowship is awarded to the person either directly by the agency or by a local committee on behalf of the agency
• existence of an employer-employee relationship is expressly prohibited by the external funding source
• the fellow is not eligible for Rice benefits except for some medical insurance by special agreement
• the appointments are processed through the appropriate academic deans and Human Resources
• the appointments are limited by the terms of the fellowship
• the appointments are not subject to Affirmative Action requirements.

(2) ALL OTHER POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH POSITIONS

• The appointments are normally initiated within seven years from date a Ph.D. is conferred and
• the appointments are usually supported by an external research grant/contract
• the appointments are limited to a maximum of five years
• the employee is considered staff for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits
• the appointments are processed through the appropriate academic deans and Human Resources
• the appointments are subject to Affirmative Action requirements.
• see also Office of Research and Graduate Studies

VISITING SCHOLARS

This category is used to describe positions characterized by the following conditions:

• Term of appointment limited to one year; appointments may be renewed in unusual circumstances
• prior to appointment, the candidate must certify that he or she has a position elsewhere to resume at end of period
• the employee is considered staff for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits
• the appointments are processed through the appropriate academic deans and Human Resources
• the appointments are not subject to Affirmative Action requirements.

STAFF RESEARCH POSITIONS

There are three categories of staff research positions:

(1) RESEARCH SCIENTISTS. This category is used to describe several professional staff positions such as Research Scientist, Senior Research Scientist, or a title tied to a specific discipline such as Research Engineer, Research Biochemist, etc. These positions are characterized by the following conditions:

• The appointments are usually supported by an external research contract/grant and continuing appointment is dependent on availability of funds
• these positions are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act
• the employee is considered staff for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits
• the appointments are processed through the Human Resources Employment Office
• the appointments are posted in the Human Resources Employment Office and processed through the appropriate academic dean and Human Resources.
• the appointments are subject to Affirmative Action requirements.

(2) RESEARCH TECHNICIANS – EXEMPT. This category is used to describe professional support positions that bear titles such as Research Assistant, and is categorized by the following conditions:

• The appointments are usually supported by an external research contract/grant and continuing appointment is dependent on availability of funds
• these positions are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act
• the employee is considered staff for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits
• the appointments are posted in the Human Resources Employment Office and processed through the appropriate academic dean and Human Resources
• the appointments are subject to Affirmative Action requirements.

(3) RESEARCH TECHNICIANS - NON-EXEMPT. This category is used to describe non-professional support positions such as Technician, Technical Assistant, Laser Technician, etc. and is categorized by the following conditions:

• The appointments are usually supported by an external research contract/grant and continuing appointment is dependent on availability of funds
• these positions are not exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and overtime pay or time off in lieu of pay are required
• the employee is considered staff for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits
• the appointments are posted in the Human Resources Employment Office and processed through the appropriate academic dean and Human Resources
• the appointments are subject to Affirmative Action requirements.
II. Responsible Official and Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation

Responsible Official: Vice Provost for Research

See also:
Benefits Eligibility
Employment
Equal Employment/Affirmative Action

Policy History
Clerical Change: February 2, 2018