DETERMINING THE NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR RESEARCH PERSONNEL

STEP 1 - Ensure the individual is eligible for employment status.

1. The individual is paid from a research grant(s) administered at SFU and is not:
   - a University Research Associate (refer to Policy R50.01)
   - a Postdoctoral Fellow (refer to Policy R50.03)

2. The individual is paid from a research grant(s) administered at SFU and is:
   - earning employment income (scholarship is not employment income)

If both statements are true, the individual is eligible for employment status as a Research Assistant or Research Support.

STEP 2 - Identify the type of work the individual is doing.

The individual’s list of duties may include a combination of research and research support activities – consider the full scope of work and what they will be focusing on most of the time.

IS THE INDIVIDUAL:

.... primarily performing work that involves conducting research as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency as involving “a critical or scientific inquiry aimed at the discovery of new facts, or the development of new interpretations or applications”?

If this statement is true, this individual is considered to be primarily conducting research and is therefore eligible to be included in TSSU.

✓ Check “Research Assistant” in the Employment Type box at the top of the Payroll Appointment Form (PAF) when preparing an appointment, re-appointment or extension.

OR, IS THE INDIVIDUAL:

.... primarily performing work required to support the research objectives, but which does not require conducting research as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency as involving “a critical or scientific inquiry aimed at the discovery of new facts, or the development of new interpretations or applications”, and

... primarily devoting their time to research support duties or providing expertise outside the research area necessary to meet the project objectives/deliverables?

If these statements are true, this individual is considered to be primarily providing research support and is therefore excluded from TSSU.

✓ Check “Research Support” in the Employment Type box at the top of the Payroll Appointment Form (PAF) when preparing an appointment, re-appointment or extension.

If the appointment is earning employment income but is neither Research Assistant nor Research Support, check “Other Non-Continuing”.

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RESEARCH ASSISTANT OR RESEARCH SUPPORT?

Appointments for what were previously referred to as Research Assistants earning employment income must be identified as “research assistant” or “research support” in order to determine eligibility for TSSU membership. This distinction is made while completing the relevant Payroll Appointment Form (PAF) for new appointments, re-appointments and extended appointments. The following definitions and examples explain the distinctions to help with this assessment.

It is important to first confirm that the individual is being paid from a research grant(s) administered by SFU and is working on a research project, and is not a Postdoctoral Fellow or other senior researcher (post-PhD) such as a University Research Associate, and is not being paid scholarship income for this appointment.

If the appointment is earning employment income but is neither Research Assistant nor Research Support, select “Other Non-Continuing” on the PAF.

DEFINITION OF A RESEARCH ASSISTANT

An employee performing work that primarily involves research* defined as a critical or scientific inquiry aimed at the discovery of new facts, or the development of new interpretations or applications. The work is paid by funding held by a grant-holder, or Principal Investigator, or Chair/Dean, who is a University employee, typically faculty, and where those grant funds are administered through SFU.

Examples of Research Assistant Duties and Responsibilities

The individual may undertake some or all of the following. The list is for example only and not meant to be exhaustive.

- Assist in the development of models used for research, with the design of research projects and in defining the overall direction of research.
- Perform research to determine the applicability of new technology and systems related to research project work.
- Design, modify and perform activities within research projects.
- Perform data collection, sampling, identification and/or preparation.
- Administer forms or questionnaires to gather data; record and/or code data or observations.
- Maintain research-related records and databases, enter data according to established protocols.
- Analyze, structure and interpret research data.
- Perform system design, prototyping and development as a research activity.
- Set up, maintain and test experiments.
- Observe and report the behaviour of specimens or research participants.
- Perform literature or archival research.
- Perform surveys and/or conduct interviews as a research activity.
- Contribute to and/or lead development of policy report, academic publications and presentations.

Individuals who are primarily conducting research are eligible for TSSU membership. Please indicate “Research Assistant” when appointing, re-appointing or extending individuals primarily doing this type of work.

*CRA definition: research involves a critical or scientific inquiry aimed at the discovery of new facts, or the development of new interpretations or applications.
DEFINITION OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

The work performed by the individual primarily supports the research project’s objectives, but does not require conducting research* itself. The individual primarily performs research support duties or provides expertise outside the research area necessary to meet the project objectives/deliverables.

Examples of Research Support Duties and Responsibilities

The individual may undertake some or all of the following. The list is for example only and not meant to be exhaustive.

Administrative/Financial
- ✓ Assist PI with project compliance and ethics and grant applications.
- ✓ Financial reporting.
- ✓ Report to Board of Directors (e.g. NCE, IRC, etc.) and funding agencies.
- ✓ Plan and coordinate research-related meetings, events and/or liaison work.
- ✓ Manage project schedule, resources (human, financial and physical) and/or budget and expenditures.
- ✓ Schedule or organize laboratory work, fieldwork and/or other research-related logistics.
- ✓ Prepare project financial and account reconciliation reports.
- ✓ Assist in running a laboratory, perform tasks such as purchasing supplies and minor equipment and maintaining associated accounts.
- ✓ Provide planning and policy advice.

Lab Management
- ✓ Oversee lab operations.
- ✓ Assist PI with project compliance and ethics and grant applications.
- ✓ Research and determine the applicability of new technology and systems related to research project work.
- ✓ Trouble-shoot and maintain equipment.
- ✓ Order equipment and lab supplies.
- ✓ Develop operating protocols and safety procedures.
- ✓ Train research assistants on use of equipment.
- ✓ Assist with report writing.

Communications/Technical Writing
- ✓ Assist with report writing.
- ✓ Perform journal reviewer selection, prepare manuscripts for production and communicating with journal authors, reviewers, etc.
- ✓ Manage or participate in research-related social media presence.
- ✓ Communications to stakeholders e.g. newsletters, documentation (e.g. videography).

IT/Knowledge Translation (Developer, Programmer, Coder)
- ✓ Develop software/applications.
- ✓ Assist in the design and maintenance of research databases and project management systems.
- ✓ Perform system design, prototyping and development.
- ✓ Perform assigned information and web management tasks.

Individuals who are primarily providing research support are excluded from TSSU. Please indicate “Research Support” when appointing, re-appointing or extending individuals to this type of work.

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