FACT SHEET: Research Personnel as SFU Employees

Creating the Necessary Processes & Documents

- Processes, forms and guidelines will be created to support the hiring, onboarding and ongoing employment of research personnel: current eligible, and future new (and re-appointments).
- Decisions have not yet been made around things like who will be responsible for employment contracts, what the steps for hiring new RAs will be, etc. – grant holders and Department Administrators will be involved in discussions about how these should work, and support will be provided for any new steps or forms that result.
- Tailored onboarding documents need to be created for eligible research personnel who will be appointed in the fall semester e.g. Offers of Employment, requiring specific details from grant holders.

Understanding the Work Research Assistants Do

- We need to understand what type of work our RAs are doing to inform planning for their employment, facilitate hiring and employment practices for PIs and Depts, and assist with future collective bargaining.
- The title “Research Assistant” is currently used for a variety of individuals, doing a variety of work and there’s a chance not all of them are eligible for employment status.
- Our approach has been to group those doing similar work together, using role “profiles” that describe a handful of generally accepted work duties – this data gathering applies only to grant-funded RAs.
- Directors of Administration and Department Managers are advising on the most efficient way to gather this data.

What’s Involved for Grant Holders

- Your expertise will be requested to help define the processes, forms and guidelines that will support this group's employment.
- Your knowledge will be needed to create accurate Offers of Employment for existing eligible research personnel.
- Your knowledge will be required to identify which role profile best describes the work being done by your current RAs. Note that terms of employment for current research personnel will not change as a result of this process; however, these may be amended once the collective bargaining process is complete.

What’s Involved for Research Personnel

- Those research personnel who are identified as eligible to become employees will be invited to sign an Offer of Employment formalizing their employment status with SFU. Terms and conditions of employment will be captured as they exist in their current appointments.
- This process will begin in June 2020. If you are not contacted with an Offer of Employment, continue to follow your contracted terms and work duties as usual.
- Terms of employment may be revised when a Collective Agreement has been ratified; upon ratification, they may be eligible for benefits, as negotiated within the collective bargaining process.

Unionization

- SFU has agreed to voluntarily recognize the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) as the Union for eligible RAs.
- Only SFU employees are eligible for union membership. Currently, grant-funded RAs are not employees of the university, and therefore RAs are not yet recognized members of the TSSU.
- Some employees currently in our systems as RAs may not meet the criteria to be recognized as RAs for the purposes of this project and, as such, may not be eligible for TSSU membership.
- Future employment terms and conditions for employees will be negotiated as part of the bargaining process; in the meantime, current employment terms and conditions will continue to apply.
- Research personnel are invited to contact TSSU to assist the Union in preparing for collective bargaining on behalf of those who do become employees. Research personnel may work with TSSU in advance of being confirmed as eligible and/or signing Offers of Employment.
- All inquiries related to eligibility for membership of TSSU, CUPE or APSA, should be referred to Labour Relations.