FACT SHEET – Employing Research Employees

Grant-funded research employees (Research Assistant and Research Support) have now been transitioned to employees of SFU, rather than of individual grant holders. Research grant employees continue to report directly to the grant holder (Supervisor), and Supervisors continue to be responsible for maintaining employment standards.

Comprehensive information can be found on the HR Research People Team (RPT) website, and the BC Employment Standards Guide.

Eligibility

- New appointment, re-appointment or extension of grant-funded individuals all Funds.
- Graduate students receiving funding for work contributing to their graduate degrees receive Scholarship Income, not Employment Income and are therefore not grant employees and will not be transitioned to University employment.

Categorization

- Research employees will need to be categorized in either the ‘Research Assistant ‘employment category, or the ‘Research Support’ employment category. Please review Guideline for Determining Research vs Research Support posted to the RPT website to determine the difference. Please reach out to the RP Team (rpinfo@sfu.ca) if you require assistance.

Appointment or Re-Appointment Contracts

- Supervisors and prospective employees will agree on terms of employment, but Supervisors will not issue any document for the employee’s signature – RPT will issue formal offers of employment outlining the terms and conditions of employment, as provided by the Supervisor.
- A signed acceptance of employment offer must be received from the employee before work can begin. RPT will copy you on the offer letter when it goes to the prospective employee, and
- Research employees being re-appointed require a letter from HR to notify of the change in expected end date of the appointment, or a new employment contract. When a PAF is submitted, the RP Team will determine which is required, and will reach out if there are any follow up questions.
- Contracts are typically Indefinite Term. Opting for a Fixed Term contract will result in a payout of the contract if the appointment ends earlier than the original end date.

Rate of Pay & Benefits

- Employees must be paid BC’s minimum wage (currently $15.65/hour). Any rate of pay above minimum wage is at the discretion of the Supervisor. Note that some funding agencies may have restrictions or requirements for rates of pay.
- The Supervisor’s grant will continue to be responsible for statutory benefits (CPP, EI, WCB, EHT).
- Supervisors may offer medical benefits (discretionary) if allowed by the granting agency (employer portion is 50%, RA pays 50%). Note that Tri-Council funds generally do not allow for coverage of discretionary benefits.

Vacation

- Hourly employees must receive a minimum of 4% pay in lieu of vacation. There is no requirement for employees to take vacation time and any time taken would be unpaid.
- Salaried employees must receive a minimum of 2 weeks vacation per year (pro-rated for contracts of <1 year):
  - Supervisors must track employee vacation time taken. If any vacation time is unused at the end of a contract, it will be paid out in a lump sum to the employee.
  - Supervisors should ensure all employees request vacation time in writing.
  - An in-house system may be available for time recording (ask your Department Manager or Financial Assistant); or use the time recording tool created by RPT.

Overtime and Statutory Holidays

- Any hours worked over 8 in one day or 40 in one week are subject to overtime rates.
- Overtime must be pre-approved in writing by the Supervisor.
- Overtime may be banked for time in lieu if requested by the employee. Time in lieu is accrued at the overtime rate. Any hours banked must be paid out at the employee’s written request.
- When appointing, consideration must be given to the total number of hours an individual is working in all
positions they hold at SFU. Total number of hours cannot exceed 40 per week, or 8 hours per day; at that point overtime will apply.

- Employees who have been employed for 30 days and have worked for 15 of the past 30 days qualify to be paid for statutory holidays.

Termination & Resignation

- Employees and Supervisors will receive a notice of an upcoming end to an appointment (termination) from RPT prior to the natural end date of an employment contract. The Supervisor will have the option of re-appointing or allowing the contract to end naturally.
- Supervisors should request written notice of resignation if an employee requests an early end to their employment.
- Termination of a contract by the Supervisor prior to the natural end date requires provision of a notice period or a payout for the notice period.
- Contracts may be terminated for cause without notice; however, documentation and oversight are required – contact your Department Manager or rp_info@sfu.ca before proceeding with a termination for cause.

Employee Supervision and Documentation

- The RP Team will maintain employee files for the research employee group
- The HR website contains valuable information for managers and supervisors.
- A new employee orientation module specific to RAs and PDFs is available in Canvas. A link will be provided to the employee as part of their HR hire package. Supervisors may wish to familiarize themselves with the content.

Feel free to speak with your Department Manager or email rp_info@sfu.ca if you have further questions.