

**TO:** Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

**FROM:** Non-Faculty Academic Research Job Family Task Force  
Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by  
Andrew Cohen and Sarah Hokanson, Co-Chairs

**DATE:** May 27, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Recommendations to streamline and standardize non-faculty research positions

The members of the Non-Faculty Academic Research Job Family Task Force are grateful for the opportunity to serve the Boston University community in making recommendations toward streamlining the positions that contribute to our academic research enterprise.

In response to the Provost's charge, outlined in her memo dated March 3, 2016, the Task Force has reviewed data and information related to the current Academic Research Job Family (Appendix 1) structure at Boston University during eight meetings between March 28 and May 23, 2016. We have examined the current data held within SAP on academic research staff, market research data on academic research positions nationally, as well as the practices of seven of our peer institutions. Our discussions focused on distinguishing this classification of positions at Boston University from research support or research faculty roles, and identifying the specific roles and responsibilities of researchers across both campuses. We also considered what academic responsibilities these roles should have, such as developing proposals, teaching, and formally supervising undergraduate or graduate students. As we developed and finalized our recommended classifications and considered their policy implications, we consulted with stakeholders across the University, including University leadership, faculty, administrative staff, and members of the current job family themselves (primarily postdoctoral scholars).

As a result of our work, we present to you our findings and a series of recommendations that describe a smaller set of non-faculty research roles and create a clear promotion pathway for non-faculty researchers desiring a longer-term career at Boston University. We hope these recommendations provide guidance for you and President Brown as a plan is established for implementing both the current policy for postdoctoral scholars and subsequent policies related to these critical roles within our research community.

**Conclusion 1: Academic responsibilities and privileges outside of research are characteristic of faculty appointments rather than staff positions.**

Individuals with faculty appointments are expected to be qualified for research, teaching, and service at Boston University, even if their primary responsibility is devoted to conducting research. Faculty also have the opportunity to formally advise and supervise undergraduate and graduate students, and may have other academic privileges and responsibilities associated with their appointment.

Our task force felt that these expectations were the distinguishing criteria between faculty and non-faculty roles at the University, and therefore that none of the positions under our consideration should be granted automatic academic privileges or responsibilities outside of research. Individual researchers in non-faculty appointments may be granted such privileges through the mechanisms that currently exist institutionally.

**Conclusion 2: The non-faculty research job family should not include jobs that support, rather than conduct, research as their primary responsibility.**

In order to define the specific roles and responsibilities for positions within the Non-Faculty Research Job Family, our task force first identified the criteria that distinguish these positions from other roles within the University research enterprise. The roles and expectations of non-faculty research positions differ from research administration or research support roles (e.g. lab managers, technicians).

**To summarize Conclusions 1 and 2:**

- **Non-Faculty Research Staff** – Primary responsibilities are related to conducting University research and research-based scholarship. Academic privileges and responsibilities such as serving as PI on a grant, supervising undergraduate and graduate students, and teaching may be granted by separate request;
- **Research Administration and Support** – Primary responsibilities are related to supporting University research infrastructure and operations;
- **Research Faculty** – Primary responsibilities are related to overseeing and conducting University research and research-based scholarship. Candidates for research faculty appointments should also be qualified to engage in teaching and service. Academic privileges and responsibilities may be assigned as part of the appointment.

Though departments may hire a range of research-related positions within these categories, the Task Force only considered roles and responsibilities that matched the criteria of Non-Faculty Research Staff for inclusion in this job family.

**Conclusion 3: All of the positions within this Job Family should be compensated.**

The Task Force considered that there are a substantial number of volunteers within the current Academic Research Job Family. However, we do not feel that it is appropriate for any of the categories within this family to include unpaid positions; all faculty or staff conducting research at Boston University should be compensated in some form, either through internal or external funding sources. Our proposed Non-Faculty Research Job Family does not identify a specific position for volunteers; Human Resources, ISSO, and other University stakeholders will need to separately consider where unpaid volunteer researchers fit into the University landscape (e.g. interns, etc.)

#### **Conclusion 4: Criteria that distinguish the different types of positions contributing to research and research-related scholarship at Boston University.**

The Task Force considered many variables that could distinguish between different job categories within the Non-Faculty Research Job Family. Our overall goal was to streamline the current twelve categories into a smaller classification system, which would allow for individuals that perform the same job functions to be titled consistently, even if there are subtle differences between their appointments. The current policy for postdoctoral scholars passed by Boston University Council in March 2016 established a minimum salary and term limit for postdoctoral appointments, and so we also considered those criteria for the remainder of the Non-Faculty Research Job Family. In addition, the Task Force considered the current criteria that delineate the twelve categories and separated them into two categories:

- *Criteria that do not impact the day-to-day responsibilities of positions:* compensation (e.g. stipend vs salary), eligibility for benefits, source of funding, visiting/visa status, discipline (e.g. “engineer” vs “scientist”);
- *Criteria that impact the day-to-day responsibilities of positions:* degree requirement, training component, and experience requirements.

Our recommendations below are based on applying criteria that impact the day-to-day responsibilities of positions as the defining characteristics of roles within the Non-Faculty Research Family.

#### **Recommendations**

Data about the positions within the current Academic Research Job Family is requested annually by the National Science Foundation and is often used in internal decision-making processes, including those related to University policies. However, our ability to have a complete understanding of the staff we have in each research role is limited by the complexity of the current job matrix. Feedback from departments indicates that they do not always know how to categorize individuals during the appointment process, and as a result, titles are inconsistently applied across the University. Our recommendations below capture the essential staff roles that contribute to research at Boston University.

Also, there is growing pressure within higher education to create a clear promotion pathway for PhD researchers as staff within the academy in response to the limited number of available faculty positions relative to the number of postdoctoral scholars and PhD graduates.

Recommendation 1. Consolidate the twelve overlapping roles within the current Academic Research Job Family into four distinct positions to create the Non-Faculty Research Job Family:

	Researcher	Postdoctoral Scholar	Research Scholar	Senior Research Scholar
Degree requirement?	Yes – BA/BS or MA/MS or equivalent	Yes – doctorate or equivalent	Yes – doctorate or equivalent	Yes – doctorate or equivalent
Being trained?	No	Yes	No	No
Experience requirement?	No	No	No	Yes
Salary minimum	No	Yes – set annually	Yes – graded depending on degree & experience	Yes – graded depending on degree & experience
Term limit	Yes - renewal required annually up to 5 years	Yes – 5 years	Yes - appointments up to 5 years, term limit 10 years	No

We have included a flow chart (Appendix 2) that could be used as a resource for departments and faculty to help guide more consistent appointments within this family going forward. These job categories and assigned job codes should be used exclusively for this family, but departments may wish to grant titles that describe the duties and responsibilities more specifically.

Recommendation 2. Academic responsibilities outside of research should not be granted to these positions automatically, but staff in these roles may request the privileges appropriate for their role within the University:

	Researcher	Postdoctoral Scholar	Research Scholar	Senior Research Scholar
PI Status	No	Yes – by request, but only for specific types of awards	Yes – by request	Yes – by request
Teaching	No	Yes – as part of training	Yes – by special appointment / arrangement	Yes – by special appointment / arrangement
Formally supervise undergraduate or graduate students	No	No	No – but can serve on academic committees by special appointment	No – but can serve on academic committees by special appointment

Recommendation 3. Establish a new University policy through the Research and Scholarly Activities Committee within Boston University Council that will:

- Set a minimum salary for all PhD researchers no less than the minimum set annually for postdoctoral scholars;
- Establish renewal restrictions and term limits as outlined in the table above;
- Review vacation and sick time accrual for positions within this job family.

Establishing a minimum salary for all PhD researchers will avoid misclassification of postdoctoral scholars and provide equity and consistency for such researchers, while establishing

renewal restrictions and term limits associated with these appointments creates an opportunity for faculty and departments to thoughtfully consider retention and promotion of these individuals.

We have included a suggested timeline for communication and implementation of the recommendations within this report (Appendix 3) for your consideration. It is our hope that these recommendations and our work will contribute to advancing Boston University's research excellence by providing consistent criteria and a streamlined framework non-faculty research positions.

### **Members of the Task Force**

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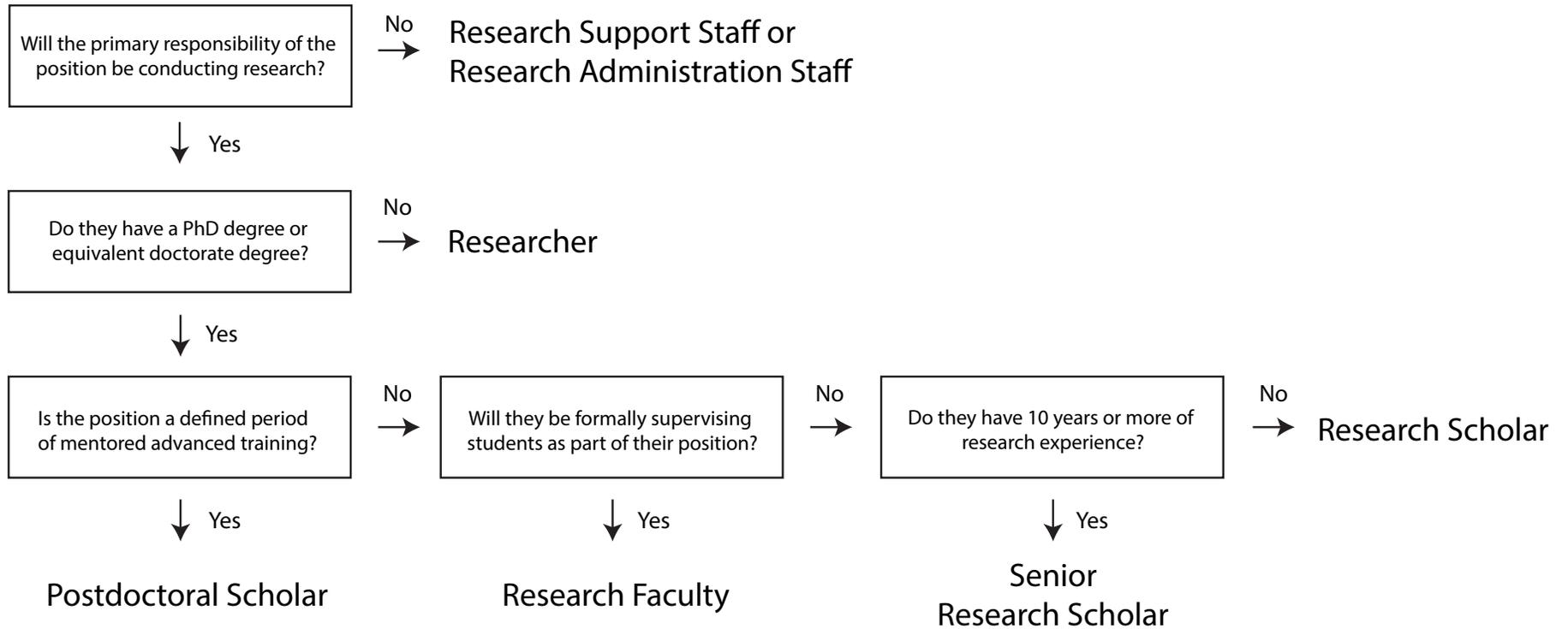
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Appendix 1: Current Academic Research Job Family – established 1/22/2010  
[http://www.bu.edu/hr/documents/ARJF\\_Job\\_Summaries.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/hr/documents/ARJF_Job_Summaries.pdf)

<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>Job Summary / Primary Purpose</b>
<b>Visiting Researcher</b>	An uncompensated member of the University community who participates in and contributes to its research programs and scholarly projects
<b>Visiting Fellow</b>	A short-term, compensated member of the University community who participates in and contributes to its research programs and scholarly projects
<b>Research Fellow</b>	A compensated member of the University community who participates in and contributes to its research programs and scholarly projects; has a Master's degree or equivalent (including All-But-Dissertation)
<b>Postdoctoral Fellow (NON-EMPLOYEE)</b>	An individual supported on an externally-funded <b>training grant</b> and engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training and professional development following completion of a doctoral degree program. Not a BU employee.
<b>Postdoctoral Associate</b>	An individual who has received a doctoral degree or equivalent and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored scholarly development or research. Typically an entry-level postgraduate appointment.
<b>Sr. Postdoctoral Associate</b>	An individual who has received a doctoral degree or equivalent, must have a minimum of three years of postgraduate experience, and continues in a temporary and defined period of mentored scholarly development or research.
<b>Research Scientist, Research Engineer, Academic Researcher</b>	An individual who contributes to the research programs of the University under supervision of a Principal Investigator, and holds a post-graduate degree appropriate to the field of research, or an equivalent combination of education and advanced research experience as appropriate to the field of expertise.
<b>Sr. Research Scientist, Sr. Research Engineer, Sr. Academic Researcher</b>	An individual with the qualifications of a Research Scientist / Engineer or Academic Researcher and having prior experience of at least five years. Will have a record of demonstrated ability to develop new concepts and/or to conduct independent research as evidenced by publications, patents, or other professional accomplishments.
<b>(Research Assistant)</b>	This title will henceforth be restricted to BU graduate students engaged in research. This position is not a part of the job family, since students have a distinct status within the University; it is included here for clarity with respect to past practice.

Appendix 2: Non-Faculty Research Job Family Hiring Flow Chart



Appendix 3: Communications Plan and Suggested Implementation Plan Timeline

<b>Communications Plan</b>		
<i>Action step</i>	<i>Responsible stakeholder</i>	<i>Type(s) of communication</i>
Findings of Task Force circulated	Provost's Office/Research	Memo, updated Task Force website, newsletters
Findings presented at University Council	Task Force Co-Chairs	Presentation, Q&A
Feedback gathered for implementation	Task Force Co-Chairs and/or Members	Flash poll/survey, presentations at School/College and Departmental meetings
Implementation plan circulated	Provost's Office/Research	Memo, updated Task Force website, newsletters
<b>Suggested Implementation Timeline</b>		
<i>Action step</i>	<i>Responsible stakeholder</i>	<i>Completion date</i>
Hiring toolkit developed for departments with flow chart, broad descriptions of each job category, and required SAP data fields	Human Resources	11/01/16
Checklist of key requirements for each appointment (e.g. salary minimum, term limits, visa sponsorship) and required SAP data fields developed	Human Resources, ISSO	11/01/16
Standard hiring work flow developed	Human Resources, ISSO, Provost's Office	11/01/16
New Non-Faculty Job Family established	Human Resources, Provost's Office	1/1/17
Appointments prior to 1/1/17 re-categorized	Departments in consultation with Human Resources and/or Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs	1/1/18