Staff Research Associate

Staff Personnel Manual
University of California, Los Angeles
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Class Specifications – I.25
Staff Research Associate V – 9609 (A&PS)
Staff Research Associate IV – Supervisor – 9614 (A&PS)
Staff Research Associate IV – 9610 (A&PS)
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STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (SRA)

Series Description

Staff Research Associates apply specialized academic or scientific knowledge to perform or supervise experimental procedures in support of research and teaching.

A&PS Benchmark Level

The A&PS benchmark level is Staff Research Associate II/Staff Research Associate II—Supervisor. Incumbents typically apply specialized academic or scientific knowledge and skill to make technical determinations and/or observations; assist with research and teaching; and may manage small labs.

Journey or Fully Operational Level in Series

The fully operational level is Staff Research Associate II/Staff Research Associate II—Supervisor.

Certification or Licensure Requirements

None.

SERIES CONCEPT

Staff Research Associates (SRAs) perform or supervise the performance of laboratory and/or field experimental procedures in support of academically supervised research and teaching in the natural, physical or social sciences; and perform other related duties as required.

Incumbents perform technical determinations and/or make technical observations in one or more fields of scientific endeavor that usually yield technical data about the phenomena under investigation. The fields
may include chemistry, physics, biochemistry, microbiology, botany, zoology, psychology, biology, geology, bacteriology and other similar fields. The technical determinations include, for example, biochemical, radiochemical, physical, and biological preparation, examination and analysis of specimen material. Installation, operation, and maintenance of laboratory and field instruments may be an essential part of the duties. The technical data yielded are used primarily for research and teaching, but the data may also relate to public service, such as patient care or agricultural extension.

Incumbents work under academic supervision, although they may report directly to a higher-level Staff Research Associate. They may participate or assist in teaching activities by discussing experimental procedures with students, demonstrating procedures, working with faculty in presenting, developing or modifying portions of course material, and by providing technical supervision to students and visitors during assigned periods. However, they do not have formal responsibility for teaching and course content, which is an academic function. Normally, engagement in teaching activities is ancillary to engagement in research activities under academic supervision.

Incumbents participate in research activities at several levels of difficulty and responsibility described in the Class Concepts. Incumbents at the highest level described make significant innovative contributions to research methodology of a degree that typically changes the course of the investigation. However, they are not principal investigators, which is an academic role; and they may participate in, but are not assigned final responsibility for determining (a) the general nature and course of investigation, (b) general methodological approaches for investigation, and (c) the scientific validity of research results.

The Staff Research Associate series is a broad series encompassing disciplines in the natural, physical and social sciences. The examples cited in the Class Concepts are illustrative and do not preclude allocation to the series of positions requiring equivalent technical knowledge and skill. The Staff Research Associate series specifically recognizes supervisory responsibility in three of its five levels (II-IV). Positions allocated to the supervisory titles in this series must meet the criteria for supervision as defined in the Supplemental Guidelines for Supervisor Classes (SAM 12).

CLASS CONCEPTS

**Staff Research Associate V**

Under general direction, incumbents direct the work of a large and complex laboratory including the supervision of technical staff consisting of Staff Research Associates I through IV, with at least three positions at the Staff Research Associate II level or higher. They take charge of the development and execution of major or multi-disciplinary research projects, and perform state-of-the-art, complex research projects in collaboration with academic supervisors, making significant, original contributions to research methods, including authorship or co-authorship of published findings.

Incumbents typically consult with the academic supervisor and other academics or professional researchers on the nature and overall objectives of the research project; develop, plan, and direct the technical work of several Staff Research Associates, advising them on the more difficult and problematic areas they may encounter; contribute significant original/innovative ideas of major methodological significance to the research; exercise independent judgment and discretion, initiative, and resourcefulness in making decisions about the research; and write articles for publication in scientific journals, or for presentations at conferences or symposiums.
Assignments at this level typically involve supervisory responsibilities for other Staff Research Associates.

**Staff Research Associate IV/ Staff Research Associate IV –Supervisor**

Under direction, incumbents (a) direct the work of a large laboratory including the supervision of a group of Staff Research Associate III’s, II’s, and I’s, or (b) take charge of the execution of research projects or major portions of research projects which have been broadly outlined by academic supervisors, or (c) engage in difficult and complex research projects in collaboration with academic supervisors, making important original contributions pertaining to laboratory and/or field experimental procedures. Within a selected methodological approach, the selection of specific methods to achieve the objective is frequently left to the Staff Research Associate, who typically contributes original ideas of major methodological significance to the prosecution of the investigation proceeding both by reference to the general body of scientific knowledge and by application of trial and error methods.

Incumbents typically consult with academic supervisors on the nature and general plan of approach to basic research problems; read and abstract scientific articles pertaining to prosecution of broad research problems; proceed without specific direction to organize and work out all techniques involved; plan, assign, and direct the work of several Staff Research Associates, advising them on problems which they are unable to solve; contribute original ideas of major methodological significance to the prosecution of laboratory and/or field phases of research; take complete charge of the execution of laboratory phases of major research projects over considerable periods of time, such as during prolonged absences of academic supervisors; exercise judgment, initiative, and resourcefulness in making decisions, consulting on occasion with academic supervisors; and prepare complete written reports on all phases of laboratory and/or field experimental work involved with research projects. Such reports usually are used for major portions of articles to be prepared for publication.

Assignments at this level of difficulty may be supervisory or non-supervisory. Supervisory assignments typically carry responsibility for laboratory management and supervision of Staff Research Associates, Laboratory Assistants and graduate students. Assistance and participation in teaching activities, as described in the Series Concept, may be viewed as similar in supervisory responsibility for the purpose of evaluating laboratory management responsibility. Non-supervisory assignments at this level typically require sustained, frequent contributions of (a) original ideas of major importance in the prosecution of laboratory and/or field phases of research and/or (b) interpretation of data yielded by new/original method(s) used or developed in the course of laboratory and/or field phases of research. Co-authorship of scientific journal articles may indicate the level of innovational contribution publicly acknowledged at this level, but it is not a necessary requirement for allocation of such positions.

**Staff Research Associate III/ Staff Research Associate III –Supervisor**

Under general supervision, incumbents (a) direct the work of a medium-sized laboratory having a staff of at least one Staff Research Associate II or two Staff Research Associate I’s, or (b) perform laboratory and/or field experimental work that requires a combination of journey level knowledge and skill in two ordinarily distinct occupational fields or scientific disciplines, or (c) undertake research projects in collaboration with academic supervisors, making innovative contributions pertaining to laboratory and/or field experimental procedures which may not change the course of an investigation but do indicate a significant independent contribution beyond the journey level.
Incumbents typically consult with academic supervisors on the nature and general plan of approach to basic research problems; read and abstract articles of value in the prosecution of broad research problems; organize and work out all techniques involved; plan and assign the work of at least one Staff Research Associate II or two Staff Research Associate I’s, advising them on problems they are unable to solve; contribute original ideas in the prosecution of laboratory and/or field phases of research; standardize new techniques and train other staff personnel and students in their use; perform specialized procedures in two ordinarily distinct occupational fields or scientific disciplines, and prepare complete written reports of laboratory and/or field experimental methods.

Assignments at this level of difficulty may be supervisory or non-supervisory. Supervisory assignments typically carry responsibility for laboratory management and supervision of at least one Staff Research Associate II and two Staff Research Associate I’s, and may also include the supervision of Laboratory Assistants and graduate students. Assistance in teaching activities, as described in the Series Concept, may be viewed as similar supervisory responsibility, for the purpose of evaluating laboratory management responsibility. Non-supervisory assignments typically require (a) contributions or original ideas of importance in the prosecution of laboratory and/or field phases of research or (b) a combination of journey level knowledge and skill drawn from two ordinarily distinct occupational fields or scientific disciplines.

The Staff Research Associate III class is intended to provide the intermediate class between the Staff Research Associate II and Staff Research Associate IV, in recognition of (a) laboratory management and supervision and/or (b) scientific innovation and/or (c) utilization of an unusual combination of advanced knowledge and skill, each of which separately would support the journey level of the field.

**Staff Research Associate II/ Staff Research Associate II –Supervisor**

Under supervision, incumbents perform (a) a wide variety of standard repetitive laboratory and/or field experimental procedures at the full operational or journey level of skill in one field of specialty; or (b) perform a limited variety of non-standard laboratory and/or field experimental procedures requiring ingenuity, resourcefulness, and adaptability to special and changing needs of research in one specialized field; or (c) perform a limited variety or repetitive but highly specialized laboratory and/or field experimental procedures.

Incumbents typically perform a wide variety of standard repetitive procedures without detailed technical supervision, usually in a well-established occupational field (i.e., chemistry, microbiology, etc.). They may also modify, vary or adapt standard procedures to meet the needs of research projects, or improve tests that are unsatisfactory, and after studying available literature, analyze and alter conditions under which determinations are made. They may also acquire and apply a body of knowledge and skill in a field of comparatively narrow scope where the emphasis is on specialized techniques.

Assignments at this level of difficulty are typically non-supervisory; however, a Staff Research Associate II may also be assigned the management responsibility for a small laboratory unit, with at least one Staff Research Associate I or a group of lower-level laboratory employees such as Laboratory Assistants, Animal Technicians, etc. This type of responsibility typically includes ordering supplies and equipment and insuring proper operation and maintenance of laboratory equipment.

Staff Research Associate II is the full operational level of the series. Examples of assignments at this level of difficulty and responsibility are:
Chemical analyst, performing a wide variety of chemical analyses, including qualitative and quantitative analyses of unknowns, by using standard methods and by developing modifications of standard methods to meet special needs.

Entomologist in biological control unit, in charge of rearing of various species of insects and parasites, including responsibility for determining the kind of food host to use, the age and culture of food host best suited, the timing of breeding and rearing operations, and kinds of parasites to rear or insects to best accomplish the experimental purposes involved.

Plant pathologist, identifying mycological organisms on plant material by microscopic examination and by keying down, using judgment when descriptions in literature are incomplete or inaccurate.

Microbiologist, isolating and purifying cultures of fungus and bacterial organisms from plant or animal materials, varying the method on each specimen to identify the organism and obtain a pure culture.

Histologist, performing a wide variety of standardized, but intricate and delicate procedures for preparing and examining plant materials for optical and/or electron microscopy.

Experimental psychologist, assisting in psychophysiological experiments on humans and animals, preparing subjects for experiments, performing psychophysical tests, improving tests as necessary and analyzing and developing statistical data.

Electron microscopist, preparing tissue for electron microscopy, maintaining electron microscopes and photographic darkroom and prep room facilities, providing individual and classroom instruction on the use of the electron microscope and related facilities.

The examples cited are typical for the class of the Staff Research Associate II, but are not intended to limit the class to the occupational fields named. All occupational fields suggested by the Series Concept may be found in the class.

**Staff Research Associate I**

Under supervision, incumbents perform standard repetitive, technical laboratory and/or field experimental procedures and/or receive training in the more difficult procedures usually requiring a theoretical background in one scientific field. The fields of work are generally those indicated in the Series Concept and further illustrated by the examples in the Class Concept for Staff Research Associate II.

Incumbents usually perform standard repetitive procedures of limited variety and/or work under close technical supervision in their initial assignments. Originality in devising or revising laboratory and/or field experimental procedures is ordinarily not expected nor required at this level. Continuing supervision over other staff personnel is not normally assigned.

Staff Research Associate I is the entry level in this series. Incumbents may perform a limited variety of non-standard repetitive procedures or a wide variety of standard repetitive procedures characteristic of the next higher level, but without having reached the level of skill proficiency required at the next higher level.
MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Incumbents are expected to possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities essential to the successful performance of the duties assigned to the positions. These skills, knowledge, and abilities are typically acquired through a combination of extensive study and experience.

NOTE: Specific qualification requirements are approved by the Personnel Manager in accordance with the provisions of Staff Personnel Policies 210.8 and 210.9 for the Staff Research Associate I and A&PS Personnel Policy 120.5 for the higher levels of the Staff Research Associate series.