

## **STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATES (SRA)**

### **OVERVIEW**

(Updated 5/23/05)

#### **Overview:**

Staff Research Associates apply specialized academic or scientific knowledge to perform or supervise lab and/or field experimental procedures and make technical determinations and/or technical observations in support of research and teaching in the natural, physical or social sciences; and perform other related duties as required.

- Work under academic supervision, although they may report directly to a higher level Staff Research Associate.
- 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.
- Fields may include chemistry, physics, biochemistry, microbiology, botany, zoology, psychology, biology, geology, bacteriology, and other similar fields.
- 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.
- Technical data yielded are used primarily for research and teaching, but data may also relate to public service, such as patient care.
- 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. However, they do not have formal responsibility for teaching and course content, which is an academic function.

#### **Difference between the LAB ASSIST and SRA:**

SRA's require a theoretical knowledge, implying a college degree related to the type of work being performed or equivalent experience. SRA's perform technical determinations and/or make technical observations, in addition to performing experiments.

Lab Assists focus mostly on the lab and setting up experiments. Lab Assists may assist with one or more standard repetitive procedures not requiring theoretical knowledge, but their main role is to assist in the research by handling the lab maintenance and equipment. An SRA I is the entry level, out of college, that is learning the procedures, but has the theoretical knowledge and is learning to conduct experiments and analyze the results.

#### **SRA Non-exempt versus Exempt:**

In order to be **EXEMPT**, both of the following must be true:

- 1) The incumbent has a relevant college degree and is using the degree in this job, AND
- 2) The majority of the work requires consistent exercise of discretion and judgment, i.e.:
  - Comparison and evaluation of possible courses of conduct and making independent decisions after the various possibilities have been considered
  - Making a decision where there is no obvious right or wrong answer
  - Not work that merely requires applying knowledge with prescribed procedures or determining which procedure to follow.

**Non-exempt** is appropriate for:

- 1) Those with degrees that are not relevant to the position or those without degrees that have comparable "theoretical knowledge".
- 2) The majority of work does not require the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment.

The decision would be made at time of appointment, since it is based on the incumbent's education and decision-making. If in doubt as to the level, non-exempt is the safest, but you can call your Compensation Analyst to discuss if you have questions. (Note: Non-exempt is paid overtime.)

### SRA I

- Entry level - Studied in school – not much experience.
- Under supervision but works under close technical supervision in their initial assignments.
- College graduate – has a little experience in theory or practice. Has theoretical knowledge/background (degree) in one scientific field.
- Performs standard repetitive procedures of limited variety
- **Or** may perform a limited variety of non-standard repetitive procedures
- Receives training in the more difficult procedures
- **Tasks often start with "Assists with....; Performs routine experiments under guidance..."**
- Originality in devising or revising experimental procedures is ordinarily not expected nor required at this level.

### SRA II – could be exempt (9612) or non-exempt (9617)

- Under supervision,
- Exempt requires relevant degree to be used in research and independent decision-making and discretion.
- Non-Exempt if they have a non-relevant degree (or non-degreed w/ theoretical knowledge) and majority of work does not require the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment.
- Performs wide variety of standard repetitive lab/ field experimental procedures at the full operational or journey level of skill in one field of specialty
- **Or** performs a limited variety of non-standard experimental procedures requiring ingenuity, resourcefulness, and adaptability to special and changing needs of research in one specialized field
- **Or** performs a limited variety of repetitive but highly specialized experimental procedures.
- **Tasks start with "Independently performs, Conducts, Ensures...."**
- Must have experience and works independently
- Preps subjects for tests/experiments, performs tests, improves tests as necessary & analyzes & develops statistical data
- Attends lab meetings

### SRA III

- Under general supervision,
- directs work of medium-sized lab having a staff of at least 1 SRA II or 1 SRA I's
- OR perform laboratory and/or field experimental work that requires a combination of journey level knowledge and skill in 2 ordinarily distinct occupational fields or scientific disciplines
- OR undertake research projects in collaboration with academic supervisors, making innovative contributions pertaining to lab and/or field experimental procedures which may not change the course of an investigation but do indicate a significant independent contribution.
- **Intermediate level** - Significant independent contribution **beyond journey level.**
- **Tasks that start with: Interprets, Analyzes, Makes determinations, Designs...**
- Prepares complete written reports of lab and/or field experimental methods.
- May be supervisory or non-supervisory.
- May do publications
- SRA III class is intended to provide the intermediate class between the SRA II and IV, in recognition of (1) lab management and supervision 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.

#### **SRA IV (supervisory or non-supervisory)**

- Under direction,
- Direct work of **large lab** including the supervision of a group of SRA's and where appropriate, related – Supervisor titles.
- **OR** take charge of the execution of research projects or major portions of research projects which have been broadly outlined by academic supervisors.
- OR engage in difficult and complex research projects in collaboration with academic supervisors, **making important original contributions pertaining to lab and/or field experimental procedures.**
- Selects specific methods to achieve the objective and typically contributes original ideas of major methodological significance to the prosecution of the investigation preceding both by reference to the general, body of scientific knowledge and by application of trial and error methods.
- May assist & participate in teaching activities
- **Tasks start with "Develops, Contributes original...."**
- 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.
- Thinks about publishing and how the specific research impacts grants and other research.

#### **SRA V – (not used often; very high academic level- could do the research on their own.)**

- Under general direction
- Make significant innovative contributions to research methodology that typically changes the course of the investigation. (*This must be written on the jd*)
- They are not principal investigators, which is an academic role
- They may participate in but are not assigned final responsibility for determining:
  - general nature and course of investigation,
  - general methodological approaches for investigation
  - Scientific validity of research results.
- Direct work of large & complex lab, including the supervision of technical staff consisting of SRA I-IV and SRA II-IV Supervisor titles, with a t least 3 positions at the SRA II level or higher
- Take charge of the development and execution of major or multi-disciplinary research projects
- 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.
- Typically consult with 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 SRA's
- Contribute significant original/innovative ideas of major mythological significance to the research
- Exercise independent judgment and discretion, initiative and resourcefulness in making decisions about the research
- Write articles for publication in scientific journals or for presentations at conferences or symposiums.