

**Learning Research and Development Center  
University of Pittsburgh**

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE POLICY**

Four kinds of professional staff currently exist at LRDC. **Senior** and **research scientists** are nationally recognized scholars who have competed for their positions through national searches. **Research specialists** are support staff hired through Pitt's human resources system. **Research associates** are Ph.D.-level scholars who work under the direction of an LRDC scientist on a particular funded project. Research associates may have been hired through a national search process, although a national search is not typical. Research associates often are capable of working independently and, at times, have applied for and won external funding as Principal Investigators.<sup>1</sup>

Hiring and Funding

Research associates are hired on a project-by-project basis. Initially, funding and continued employment will be contingent on the PI for whom the research associate works. Similar to current practice, case-by-case requests will be entertained when resources are depleted before the end of an appointment period.

Participation in LRDC activities

Research associates do not attend LRDC faculty meetings as a matter of course. From time to time they may be invited to give or hear presentations or to weigh in on a particular issue. Research associates will, however, be considered for LRDC committees and be asked to participate in Board of Visitors' meetings. Research associates will be encouraged to attend and give presentations at LRDC events such as cognitive brown bags and LSAP seminars.

Mentoring & Feedback

Responsibility for the initial mentoring of research associates typically falls to the sponsoring scientist. However, research associates who aspire to become research scientists or tenure-stream faculty (either here or elsewhere) will be able to request that their credentials be reviewed by the LRDC executive committee if at least one LRDC scientist (often, but not necessarily, their sponsor) thinks they are ready for such a review. The LRDC executive committee will review the credentials and a representative of the committee will provide feedback to the research associate.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of individuals within the Institute for Learning carry the title of Research Associate. Because their job descriptions are so different from the typical LRDC Research Associate, this policy does not address those individuals. In addition, this policy does not apply to **post-doctoral fellows** (even those who may be labeled Research Associates). Post-doc appointments are, by definition, temporary (2-3 years). However, if a post-doc becomes a Research Associate, this policy would then apply to them.

### Applying for External Funding

With the approval of the LRDC director, research associates are permitted to apply for external funding as Principal Investigators. The research associate's first application for external funding will trigger an automatic review by the LRDC executive committee (if such a review has not previously been requested and conducted). Once the first review has been conducted, the research associate will receive a "light" review each year.

### Promotion to Research Scientist

Promotion to research scientist *without a joint tenure-stream appointment* does not entail salary support (beyond 6 – 12 months of bridge funding). Non-tenure stream research scientists will be invited to all LRDC faculty meetings and will participate in the annual review process. Voting privileges will also be extended to these research scientists.

The following process will guide when and how research associates may be considered for promotion:

Note: A case must be made for consideration of promotion of a research associate to a research scientist. The case must be made by at least *three LRDC scientists*. In addition to outlining the research associate's credentials, the case must include an argument regarding how the promotion of the research associate to research scientist would be consistent with the LRDC Strategic Plan as it currently exists or a clearly articulated need within LRDC that the majority of scientists recognize.

1. The case for considering the research associate's promotion is made at a regularly scheduled LRDC faculty meeting. The case includes an argument for why the sponsoring committee envisions the candidate being competitive in a national search and an assessment of his/her alignment with LRDC goals and needs.
2. The faculty vote on whether *to consider* the promotion.
3. If consideration of promotion is granted, the research associate gives a well-publicized presentation.
4. LRDC faculty vote on the hiring.

Promotion to research scientist *with* joint appointment entails LRDC salary support (shared with the academic department). To be considered, the research associate applies to a nationally advertised search.