

RESEARCH FACULTY APPOINTMENT CATEGORY
Approved by UCFA, March 29, 2011 and Faculty Senate, February 28, 2012

PREAMBLE: The research faculty appointment category is established to meet the needs of a research intensive, land grant university in the recruitment and retention of individuals who support the research mission of the University. Research faculty appointments are consistent with the University's need to retain the flexibility to adjust its programs to meet the changing needs of the modern research University.

Research faculty are appointed on a fixed term basis, i.e., with an end date; they are not eligible for tenure. Research faculty are supported by sponsored projects or other non-appropriated University funds. The appointment is contingent on the availability of funding and cannot extend beyond the period of availability of supporting funds (see section on bridge funding).

RANKS: Research faculty are appointed at the rank of research assistant professor, research associate professor or research professor in an academic department, school and/or college.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Research faculty may serve as principal investigators or project directors on research awards and are expected to seek independent external funding in areas related to the research mission and goals of the academic unit(s). Research faculty may not be assigned regular teaching responsibilities and may not participate in the governance of the University or of an academic unit. In rare cases where a research faculty member is considered for a teaching (or other non-research) assignment, the effort of the research faculty appointment must be reduced accordingly so that the research appointment is not funding the teaching appointment. Similarly, effort related to proposal writing may not be funded by external sources.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT: Research faculty are recruited and appointed on a fixed term basis through the academic hiring procedures.

The initial appointment for a research assistant professor is normally for three years, but may range from one to three years. The initial appointment for research associate professors and research professors is for five years. In all cases, the length of the appointment is based on the external funding and may not exceed the end date of the external support. Research faculty may be appointed on an annual (AN) or academic year (AY) basis. Appointments are normally full time, with a minimum of 5% of effort supported by the general fund in order to allow time for proposal writing. Consistent with the Fixed Term Appointment policy, research faculty appointments may be eliminated for budgetary reasons prior to the ending date of the current appointment with a 30 day written notice.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW: Research faculty are expected to meet the research standards for comparably ranked tenure system faculty. Units must establish procedures for the review of research faculty in accordance with the principles in the policy on Annual Performance Review for Fixed Term Faculty and Academic Staff.

Four months prior to the end date of the appointment, a reappointment review must be conducted by the relevant academic unit that assesses the effectiveness of the research faculty member in fulfilling the research mission of the unit and in obtaining and sustaining external support. The review should also include an evaluation of the academic unit's research goals and the likely role of the research faculty member in achieving these goals in the future.

The purpose of this review is to determine whether to recommend an additional appointment, or not to reappoint. The research faculty member must be informed in writing of her/his appointment status 90 days prior to the appointment end date.

REAPPOINTMENT: Reappointment is at the discretion of the appointing unit, college, and Office of the Provost. Decisions not to reappoint may be for failure to meet unit standards for competence or performance, and/or changes in program needs or in economic circumstances, e.g., lack of external funding support. A research faculty member must be informed in writing regarding reappointment 90 days prior to the appointment end date.

Subject to the availability of external funding support, research faculty may be reappointed for the following periods:

- Research Assistant professor: up to 3 years;
- Research associate professor: up to 5 years;
- Research professor: up to five years.

PROMOTION: Research faculty may be promoted at any time in accordance with the annual timetable for promotion recommendations. Promotion to research associate professor or research professor requires meeting unit standards and criteria, including the qualifications specified below.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR RESEARCH FACULTY RANKS (Colleges, departments and schools may have additional standards and criteria):

1. Research assistant professor
 - a. Terminal degree (or equivalent) appropriate to the field;
 - b. Evidence of productive scholarship, including external funding support;
 - c. Evidence of ability to fulfill relevant responsibilities in the research enterprise.
2. Research associate professor
 - a. Terminal degree (or its equivalent) appropriate to the field;
 - b. Record of productive scholarship, including evidence of sustained external research funding and salary support;
 - c. Fulfillment of important responsibilities in the research enterprise.
3. Research professor
 - a. Terminal degree (or its equivalent) appropriate to the field;
 - b. Record of research excellence as in independent investigator, including an established record of continued research funding;

- c. Unmistakable evidence of national or international recognition by peers.

BRIDGE FUNDING: Bridge funding may be available to provide salary and benefit support for research faculty who experience a short term gap in external (sponsored) funding due to factors beyond their control. Eligibility for bridge funding is determined by the rank of the research faculty member and the years of service in that rank at MSU, as specified below:

Rank (years of service)	Funding Eligibility (salary and benefits)
Research assistant professor	
Less than 3 years of service	Not eligible
3-5 Years of service	Up to 2 months of salary and benefits
Research associate professor and Research professor	
Less than 3 years of service	Up to 6 months of salary and benefits
3 or more years of service	Up to 12 months salary and benefits

The Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (VPRGS) administers a central bridging fund which covers 50% of the total bridging costs. The appointing unit and/or college must provide the other 50% of the cost. Bridge funding is not an entitlement; approval by the VPRGS and Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources is based on consideration of the following factors:

- The quality and significance of the research faculty member’s work;
- The research faculty member’s past experience in obtaining external support for her/his work;
- The quality and significance of the research plan of the research faculty member;
- The potential for the research faculty member to obtain external support in the future;
- Evidence that the research faculty member has a grant application that is expected to be funded in the near future by an external agency, given the placement of the proposal(s) in the funding cycle;
- Evidence that the research faculty member’s work is in keeping with unit and institutional priorities;
- A statement by the appointing unit regarding the research faculty member’s continued employment.

Bridge funding requests are to be submitted by the appointing unit with the above information, including the dollar support required and a statement by the appointing unit that if the request is approved, it will cover 50% of the cost of salary and benefits. The request must be endorsed by the dean(s) with the final decision made jointly by the VPRGS and the Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources.

PAY and BENEFITS: Research faculty are covered by the same salary guidelines that apply to other non-union fixed term faculty. The guidelines provide for pay adjustments (usually annual) based on merit. Research faculty are covered by the same benefit programs applicable to other non-union fixed term faculty and academic staff, e.g., health, dental and prescription drug coverage, retirement plan, etc. Eligibility for coverage under such programs is the same as for other non-union fixed term faculty.

TERMINATION AND DISCIPLINE: Termination may occur during the term of the contract for cause or for unforeseen changes in budgetary circumstances.

Dismissal for cause during the appointment period may be the result serious personal or professional misconduct including, but not limited to (1) intellectual dishonesty; (2) acts of discrimination, including harassment, prohibited by law or University policy; (3) acts of moral turpitude substantially related to the fitness of faculty members to engage in teaching, research, service/outreach and/or administration; (4) theft or misuse of University property; (5) incompetence; (6) refusal to perform reasonable assigned duties; (7) use of professional authority to exploit others; (8) violation of University policy substantially related to performance of faculty responsibilities; and (9) violation of law(s) substantially related to the fitness of faculty members to engage in teaching, research, service/outreach and/or administration.

Prior to dismissal, the unit administrator shall confer with the dean and the Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources and provide written notice of the reason(s) for dismissal, projected date of dismissal and an opportunity to respond.

Disciplinary action other than dismissal may be imposed after the unit administrator has conferred with the dean and has provided the research faculty member with written notice of the pending disciplinary action, reason(s) for the disciplinary action, and an opportunity to respond.

Upon dismissal or other disciplinary action, the unit administrator shall provide the research faculty member with written notice of the right to file a grievance under the Faculty Grievance Policy. A research faculty member dismissed for cause will be terminated no earlier than 30 days from the date of the termination notice.

Terminations may also be implemented during the appointment period for budgetary reasons. In such cases, the research faculty member will be notified in writing of the effective date of termination at least thirty days prior to the effective date of separation.

Research faculty are covered by the provisions of the Faculty Grievance Policy.

TRANSFER OF RESEARCH FACULTY TO OTHER APPOINTMENT CATEGORIES:

Research faculty are eligible to apply for tenure system or other position openings in accordance with standard University appointment policies and procedures.