

33.99.99.C0.01 Postdoctoral Research Associates



Revised: December 21, 2023
Next Scheduled Review: October 26, 2025
[Revision History](#)

Procedure Summary

The employment of postdoctoral research associates (PRAs) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) is essential to achieve national recognition and competitiveness in research and scholarship. A PRA is a non-faculty employee who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of developing the professional skills needed to pursue their desired career path. This procedure clarifies the PRA role; provides guidelines that are compliant with applicable legislation, system policies and regulations, university rules and procedures; and facilitates employment and development of a robust postdoctoral research program.

Procedure

1. General
 - 1.1. PRAs report to the assigned principal investigator or project leader who is tasked with mentoring and creating an environment that fosters research experiences and professional development opportunities.
 - 1.2. PRAs are required to observe all applicable federal, state, and local laws, including, but not limited to, export control laws and requirements, system policies and regulations, and university rules and procedures.
 - 1.3. All non-faculty positions in the system are “at will,” meaning that any non-faculty employee may be dismissed from employment with or without cause. Any such dismissal must be in compliance with federal law, state law, system policies and regulations, and university rules and procedures. PRA terminations must be coordinated through Human Resources who will obtain the system-required approval by the Office of General Council. See additional guidance in section 13 of this procedure.

2. Qualifications

PRAs must hold the appropriate doctoral degree in an appropriate academic field awarded within the previous five (5) years. If the degree had not been conferred at the time the applicant applied for a postdoctoral position, a letter needs to be attached from the school's official graduate office and/or registrar's office certifying that all requirements for the degree have been met and stating the degree conferral date.

3. Process to Hire a Postdoctoral Research Associate

3.1. The process to recruit for and hire a PRA is facilitated by Human Resources. To create a new position, the employing department must submit a position description and a Position Review form (see Appendix) to Human Resources. Approvals are required from the dean/director/unit head, Human Resources, Budget Office, and the Office of Sponsored Research Administration if applicable. Additional approvals may be required if the fund source is not a grant or contract.

3.2. Upon approval of the position description, Human Resources will post the vacancy for a minimum of five (5) business days and list the vacancy with the Texas Workforce Commission as required by state law. Alternatively, an employing unit may request that the vacancy be posted internally or that a current employee be appointed without a search in accordance with university affirmative action guidelines. See university procedure *33.99.01.C0.01, Filling Staff Vacancies* for additional process requirements.

3.3. With justification and approval by the Department of Employee Development and Compliance Services and Human Resources, a hiring manager may recommend that a current qualified employee (e.g., a graduate assistant) be appointed as a PRA without a search process. The justification must indicate the benefit of not conducting a search and why the recommended individual should be hired over similarly situated qualified employees. A recommendation to appoint an employee to a vacant PRA vacancy requires a current position description, the submission of an employment application, and the same review and approval process as required for an external hire.

4. Appointment Period

The intention of the PRA is to provide a continued opportunity for training in a specialty area for a limited amount of time. Generally, the initial salaried appointment period is one (1) year, and the maximum allowable time for an individual to hold a PRA position is five (5) years. Offers of employment should specify the appointment period. In order for employment to continue beyond the maximum of

five (5) years, it would be necessary for the PRA to be considered for a promotion to a higher rank, such as Research Associate, Research Scientist, or Research Assistant Professor. Extensions may be granted in extraordinary circumstances (e.g., family leave, illness) if approved by the mentor, department chair/supervisor, dean/director/unit head, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and if grant funded, the Vice President for Research & Innovation. The employing unit is responsible for monitoring extension requests beyond the five (5) year appointment period.

5. Salary Levels

PRA's should be provided a salary level that reflects both their prior postdoctoral experience and what is customary for the relevant market.

6. Benefits

PRA's who are appointed for 20 hours per week or more and 4.5 months or longer and whose funding flows through the university are eligible for benefits defined by the university and administered by Human Resources. PRA's appointed on a full-time basis are eligible to participate in the Optional Retirement Program.

7. Annual Performance Evaluation

Supervisors are encouraged to provide a new hire evaluation on or before the 4th month of employment. Thereafter, evaluations will be on an annual basis and in accordance with university deadlines and submitted in the online Human Resources system.

8. Outside Employment and Additional Compensation

In rare circumstances, a PRA who holds a full-time appointment and proposes to engage other employment must obtain approval from their immediate supervisor and submit the External Employment Application and Approval form (see Appendix), subject to mentor and other required approvals. These activities must comply with all relevant university rules and procedures including those on conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, and intellectual property. See university procedure 31.05.02.C0.01, *External Employment* for more information.

9. Teaching

At the discretion of the supervisor, PRA's in some disciplines include a role in teaching. For those that do not normally include such a role, when allowed by the funding source and with the approval of the supervisor, PRA's may teach. In the case

of international PRAs, visa regulations may determine whether teaching is allowed, and Human Resources should be consulted.

10. Research Data, Records, Products, and Intellectual Property

PRAs should be aware that all data, software, research records, and similar materials generated in the course of research at TAMU-CC remain the property of the university, the laboratory, and the mentor; and their disposition must be carried out in accordance with university rules and procedures on intellectual property management and commercialization. In keeping with academic convention, the PRA may retain copies of research data that they were personally responsible for collecting or generating. Future use of such data must appropriately acknowledge TAMU-CC, as well as the PRA's research collaborators and mentor.

11. Application for Grants

PRAs may not serve as the principal investigator but may serve as a co-principal investigator or lower-ranked position on a grant. Principal investigator eligibility requirements are outlined in the Eligibility to Serve as Principal Investigator (see Appendix).

12. Termination

The appointment of a PRA may be terminated through resignation, nonrenewal of appointment, loss of funding, or dismissal. Decisions to not renew an appointment should be coordinated with Human Resources and communicated in writing at least 30 calendar days in advance. All involuntary terminations should be coordinated with Human Resources to ensure compliance with university rules and procedures.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

System Regulation [33.99.01, Employment Practices](#)

University Procedure [33.99.01.C0.01, Filling Staff Vacancies](#)

University Procedure [31.05.02.C0.01, External Employment](#)

Appendix

[Eligibility to Serve as Principal Investigator](#)
[Position Review](#)

[External Employment Application and Approval](#)

Contact Office

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