**Annex 2.3. Job Position Descriptions and Promotion Criteria for Research Staff\***

Presented below are job descriptions for researcher positions at the Urban Institute, Washington, DC. There are five researcher levels in this scheme. A few specialty positions, e.g., methodologist, fit within these five levels.

In addition to the descriptions, promotion criteria for one level to another appear together after the descriptions. Job descriptions and promotion criteria are organized from the lowest position, Research Assistant, to the highest position, Senior Fellow.

**THE URBAN INSTITUTE  
JOB DESCRIPTION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Job Title: | Research Assistant |
| Salary Grade: | R01 |
| Reports To: | More experienced researcher |

**GENERAL SUMMARY**

Under close supervision by more experienced researchers, assists in the performance of social science research by gathering information and helping to prepare material for inclusion in reports. May administer surveys and/or questionnaires and compile results. May collect, tabulate, and process data using basic statistical methods and statistical analysis software.

**TYPICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

1. Performs library research on specified topics and synthesizes material in the form of bibliographies, abstracts, memoranda and reports, according to instructions.
2. Tabulates and/or maintains collected data by means of coding or organizing data into tables or graphs.
3. Processes data from tapes or other sources of large data sets using statistical analysis software such as SAS or SPSS.
4. Analyzes primary and secondary data using basic statistical methods.
5. Administers structured surveys (telephone, written, computer-assisted, and in-person interviews) for projects requiring primary data collection.
6. May assign work to junior level administrative staff or temporary staff.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

The academic knowledge of a discipline that is generally associated with the completion of a bachelor’s degree or an equivalent combination of education and experience or demonstrated ability to perform beginning level research in a social science field.

Only those major job duties necessary for proper job evaluation and/or labor market analysis have been included. Other duties may be assigned by the supervisor.

The Urban Institute

**Job Description**

**Job Title:** Research Associate II (R02)

**Department:** Research Center

**Reports To:** Center Director

**FLSA Status:** Exempt

**Prepared By:**

**Prepared Date:** 01/20/2011

**Approved By:**

**Approved Date:**

**SUMMARY**

Responsible for conducting assigned parts of social science research projects under the general direction of more senior staff members. Assists in the development of research approach and data collection instruments and in the selection of statistical techniques. Collects data and applies standard methods of statistical analysis. Reports research findings in writing.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Reviews and writes critical summaries of research literature and/or public policy.  2. Administers surveys (telephone, written, computer-assisted, and in-person interviews). Makes site visits and conducts surveys and interviews with local public officials and/or private citizens.  3. Analyzes data using such standard statistical techniques as multiple regression and factor analysis; draws conclusions from analyzed data; prepares statistical reports and data presentations.  4. Writes up research results; assists in writing proposals and preparing papers for publication. May be called upon to present results to clients.  5. Supervises and assigns work to research assistants and more junior administrative staff. |
|  |

**SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

This job has no supervisory responsibilities.

**QUALIFICATIONS** To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

**EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE**

The academic knowledge of a discipline that is generally associated with the attainment of a master’s degree (usually with a bachelor’s degree in a related field) or an equivalent combination of education and progressively more responsible relevant work experience.

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret general business periodicals, reports, business correspondence, and government regulations. Ability to write reports and business correspondence. Ability to effectively present information and respond to questions from senior researchers, managers, and funders.

**MATHEMATICAL SKILLS**

Ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide in all units of measure, using whole numbers, common fractions, and decimals. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios, and proportions to practical situations.

**REASONING ABILITY**

Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of instructions in written, oral, or diagram form. Ability to deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

**CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS**

None are necessary for this job.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS** The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit; use hands to finger, handle, or feel; reach with hands and arms; and talk or hear. The employee frequently is required to stand and walk. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, and ability to adjust focus.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT** The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet.

**THE URBAN INSTITUTE  
JOB DESCRIPTION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Job Title: | Research Associate I |
| Salary Grade: | R03 |
| Reports To: | Senior researcher |

**GENERAL SUMMARY**

Responsible for planning and independently executing a major segment of a social science research project in consultation with and under the general supervision of a Center Director, Senior Research Associate, or Principal Research Associate. Designs the research approach and selects the appropriate quantitative or other tools of analysis, with consultation from more senior staff. Performs analysis; draws policy inferences; writes and presents reports. May develop and write proposals. May function as principal investigator and project manager for small projects.

**TYPICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

1. Develops or participates in developing research topics, proposals, and research design.
2. Selects appropriate statistical techniques to analyze collected data.
3. Supervises and/or participates in data collection, and analysis by less senior research staff; participates in interpreting data from a policy perspective.
4. Makes site visits, conducts interviews with public officials, and supervises field research.
5. Maintains budget and manages resources for segments of research project under his/her responsibility; may supervise less senior researchers.
6. Participates in writing final reports and presenting results to clients.

**QUALIFICATIONS**

A combination of the quantitative, analytical, and writing skills, relevant substantive knowledge, and social policy research experience needed to perform the duties described above, or the academic knowledge of and research experience in a discipline that is generally associated with the attainment of the Ph.D.

Only those major job duties necessary for proper job evaluation and/or labor market analysis have been included. Other duties may be assigned by the supervisor.

**Job Description**

**Job Title:** Senior Research Associate (R04)

**Department:** Research Center

**Reports To:** Center Director

**SUMMARY**

Working collaboratively with other senior and junior researchers develops and directs policy analyses, program evaluations, and research studies.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

Directs multiple research projects serving at times as principal investigator and at other times as project associate.

Develops plans for project or studies guidelines for project.

Plans schedule according to variety of methods to be used, availability and quantity of resources, and number of subordinate personnel assigned to participate in project.

Conducts research, utilizing institution library, archives, and collections, and other sources of information, to collect, record, analyze, and evaluate facts.

Discusses findings with other personnel to evaluate validity of findings.

Prepares reports of completed projects for publication in technical journals, for presentation to agency requesting project, or for use in further applied or theoretical research activities.

Conceptualizes research topics and strategies for addressing the inquiry, develops appropriate date, estimate and evaluate statistical relationships and models and present the findings in coherent, thoughtful and interesting manner.

Directs and participates in fundraising efforts to support research.

**SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Manages 1-3 subordinate employees in the junior research staff. Is responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of one or more research projects. Carries out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws. Responsibilities include interviewing, hiring, and training employees; planning, assigning, and directing work; appraising performance; rewarding and disciplining employees; addressing complaints and resolving problems.

**QUALIFICATIONS** To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

**EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE**

Doctoral degree (Ph. D.) or equivalent; and six to ten years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience.

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret the most complex documents. Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints. Ability to write speeches and articles using original or innovative techniques or style. Ability to make effective and persuasive speeches and presentations on controversial or complex topics to top management, public groups, and/or boards of directors.

**MATHEMATICAL SKILLS**

Ability to comprehend and apply principles of advanced calculus, modern algebra, and advanced statistical theory. Ability to work with concepts such as limits, rings, quadratic and differential equations, and proofs of theorems.

**REASONING ABILITY**

Ability to apply principles of logical or scientific thinking to a wide range of intellectual and practical problems. Ability to deal with nonverbal symbolism (formulas, scientific equations, graphs, musical notes, etc.,) in its most difficult phases. Ability to deal with a variety of abstract and concrete variables.

**CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS**

None.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS** The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit. The employee frequently is required to talk or hear. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT** The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet.

**Job Description**

**Job Title:** Senior Fellow (R05)

**Department:** Research

**Reports To:** Center Director

**SUMMARY**

The fundamental qualification for the Senior Fellow designation is a national reputation for policy-related research/analysis. In addition to this qualification, all of the responsibilities and qualities of the Senior Research Associate are expected of these employees.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

An extensive publications record including a significant number of articles in top-rated journals and a body of other published work such as policy briefs, contributions to books, and influential project reports;

Research leadership demonstrated through the initiation and completion of a number of successful, highly-complex research projects, and the proven ability to mentor junior staff;

A substantial fund-raising track record that contributes significantly to their research center's base of financial support.

**SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Manages 2-3 subordinate supervisors who supervise 3-5 employees in the junior research staff. Is responsible for the overall direction, coordination, and evaluation of a research program. May also directly supervises one or more non-supervisory employees. Carries out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws. Responsibilities include interviewing, hiring, and training employees; planning, assigning, and directing work; appraising performance; rewarding and disciplining employees; addressing complaints and resolving problems.

**QUALIFICATIONS** To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

**EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE**

Doctoral degree (Ph. D.) or equivalent; and more than 10 years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience.

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret the most complex documents. Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints. Ability to write speeches and articles using original or innovative techniques or style. Ability to make effective and persuasive speeches and presentations on controversial or complex topics to top management, public groups, and/or boards of directors.

**MATHEMATICAL SKILLS**

Ability to comprehend and apply principles of advanced calculus, modern algebra, and advanced statistical theory. Ability to work with concepts such as limits, rings, quadratic and differential equations, and proofs of theorems.

**REASONING ABILITY**

Ability to apply principles of logical or scientific thinking to a wide range of intellectual and practical problems. Ability to deal with nonverbal symbolism (formulas, scientific equations, graphs, musical notes, etc.,) in its most difficult phases. Ability to deal with a variety of abstract and concrete variables.

**CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS**

None.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS** The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit. The employee frequently is required to talk or hear. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT** The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually quiet.

# Standards for Promotion from

# Research Assistant to Research Associate II

Those promoted to RAII must demonstrate the ability to conduct research that is equivalent in quality and thoroughness to work done at the master’s degree level. They should be performing at a level that exceeds the level expected of a research assistant. Most importantly, they must consistently demonstrate a high level of *independence* and *initiative* in their work. This requirement applies whether the research assistant’s work is largely quantitative or qualitative. In general, it takes a minimum of two to two and a half years of experience as a research assistant to achieve the level of RAII; however, given truly exceptional performance, this standard could be met in a shorter period of time.

The research assistant should be making substantive contributions to research projects by helpingto do the following: 1) frame analytic questions; 2) identify relevant measures and data sources; 3) organize the process of data collection and analysis; and 4) interpret the results.

To be promoted, a research assistant must consistently demonstrate at least three of the following:

1. Expertise in manipulating and analyzing complex data using statistical programming software, such as SAS or STATA.
2. A detailed and thorough understanding of one or more databases (e.g., CPS, SIPP, or NSAF) or programming software. As an expert in these areas, the research assistant serves as a resource to other researchers.
3. Strong writing skills, demonstrated through high-quality contributions to reports and articles.
4. Substantive knowledge of his or her field(s), including an understanding of key policy issues and an ability to apply that knowledge to research.
5. Effective data collection through surveys or site visits. For example, the research assistant will have successfully led site interviews and synthesized information collected in a site visit, identifying key issues raised and questions for follow-up.
6. Excellent communication skills and good judgment when working with internal or external collaborators.
7. Effective mentoring of new research assistants, including helping to train them.

# Standards for Promotion from

### Research Associate II to Research Associate I

A researcher promoted to RAI must demonstrate a combination of analytic and writing skills, relevant substantive knowledge, and social policy research experience that is generally associated with the equivalent of having a Ph.D. This means that, in addition to the specific minimum requirements listed below, the candidate must have demonstrated the independent ability to conceptualize a research question, relate the research question to appropriate theories and prior research, develop research designs, manage significant components of research projects without close supervision, and interpret and communicate the findings. These skills can be demonstrated while working under the supervision of a more senior researcher. In general, a minimum of four years of research experience at the RAII level is required to achieve the level of an RAI, although not all of this experience must occur at the Urban Institute. To be *considered* for promotion, an RAII ***must meet*** *at least* ***four of the following five performance standards***:

**1. Plays a significant role in the development and design of research projects.**

* Designs the approach and methodology for at least one substantial proposal, research project, or for a significant component of a large project.
* Research designs and/or proposal contributions should demonstrate independent expertise in the concepts and methods of social science research (although they may involve the application of pre-existing methodologies and a more senior researcher may participate as an advisor and/or contributor).

**2. Independently collects, analyzes or manages qualitative information and/or quantitative data.**

* Primary responsibility for implementing statistical techniques and/or other methods for collecting, analyzing or managing data in at least one significant research project, *and*
* Demonstrated ability to synthesize results and draw conclusions from data.
* These accomplishments should be reflected in one or more proposals, design documents, or research reports.

**3. Authors or co-authors research reports.**

* Sole or co-author of at least three project reports, journal articles, or book chapters (see UI policy on authorship).
* These publications should involve different analytic efforts (not three versions of the same analysis) and demonstrate substantive knowledge of the field and relevant policy issues.
* For publications where the candidate is a co-author, he/she should have lead responsibility for one or more significant components of the analysis and writing.

**4. Manages major components of research projects.**

* Takes initiative and works collaboratively with his/her supervisor in the conduct of research projects and their management;
* Plans and manages research activities, such as data collection, data base development, or statistical analysis; *and*
* Manages schedule, budgets, and project coordination for at least one funded research project.

**5. Presents research methods and findings to clients and other outside audiences.**

* At least two presentations to clients or at academic or policy conferences, *or*
* Assigned primary responsibility for communication with outside clients, or other users of Urban Institute research.

In certain instances researchers will have non-traditional career paths. When a researcher's position is clearly defined as technical or research development, exceptional performance in areas 1 or 2 may substitute for full achievement in areas 3, 4 or 5. For example, promotion may be appropriate for a candidate who regularly develops research ideas and plays a significant role in securing support for projects (including meeting with representatives of funding organizations), or a candidate with highly specialized skills in data collection or data management who is responsible for designing major components of a survey or complex analytical model, even if that candidate does not fully satisfy the requirements in areas 3, 4 or 5. In all instances, however, a candidate must demonstrate independent conceptual ability to be promoted.

**Standards for Promotion**

**to**

**Senior Research Associate**

Those promoted to SRA must have demonstrated on more than one occasion their ability to conduct research that is equivalent in thoroughness and originality to the completion of a doctoral dissertation. Also, they generally must meet minimum requirements1 in each of four performance categories:

* Publications -- achieve the qualitative equivalent of being the sole author of two articles published in selective refereed journals (e.g., *Journal of Human Resources*);
* Other Dissemination Activities -- accomplish the qualitative equivalent of (a) being the primary author of two project reports which achieve wide circulation and attention and (b) presenting six research papers at selective national conferences;
* Fundraising -- over a period of time not longer than two years, achieve the qualitative equivalent of raising the funding for three professional-person-years of research activity; and
* Management -- over a period not longer than two years, accomplish the qualitative equivalent of managing the budget, staff, schedule, substantive work and external relations for three professional-person-years of research activity.

Substantially exceeding the minimum requirements in one category can offset a shortfall relative to the minimum requirements in another category. For example, a combination of publications and other dissemination activities can be used to satisfy one of the two dissemination requirements. Special experience (e.g., service as a program administrator or as a practicing lawyer) will be considered if relevant.

In certain instances, researchers will have non-traditional career paths. For example, if a researcher's position is clearly defined as technical, then responsibility for a substantial data collection effort or a highly technical analytic activity may offset a shortfall in another area, such as academic publications. In addition, if a researcher's position is clearly defined to focus on research development (developing new research ideas and securing funding to carry them out), then substantially exceeding the minimum requirements in fundraising and management may be combined with non-academic dissemination activities to offset a shortfall in academic publications.

1The examples provided are illustrations of achievements which would just meet the minimum standards for a category. They represent baselines against which other relevant accomplishments can be evaluated. For example, co-authorship of four or even three articles in *Evaluation Review* might be treated as equivalent to sole authorship of one article in the *Journal of Human Resource*s. Books or book chapters, certainly if published after peer review by a selective press, would also be counted.

**Standards for Promotion to Senior Fellow**

The fundamental qualification for the Senior Fellow designation is a national reputation

for policy-related research/analysis. This reputation should be demonstrated through a

number of research accomplishments:

• Research leadership as demonstrated through the initiation and completion of a number of successful, highly-complex research projects, and the proven ability to mentor junior staff;

• A substantial fund-raising track record that contributes significantly to the research center's base of financial support;

• An extensive dissemination record including

(1) a significant number of articles in top-rated journals *and/or*

(2) a body of other significant work such as policy briefs, contributions to books, Congressional testimony, invited conference presentations, and influential project reports;

It is expected that a Senior Fellow will meet most, if not all, of these criteria. It is essential that the Senior Fellow meet the publication/dissemination criteria in at least one of the two ways mentioned above. A candidate that has a shortfall in one of other two criteria (leadership or fund raising) would be held to a higher standard of excellence in the other criteria. Senior Fellow status generally will require a minimum of 15 years of research experience beyond a PhD or equivalent; while this is the expectation of the

Urban Institute, researchers that can demonstrate that these criteria have been met prior to the 15 year standard will be given full consideration. Designation of Senior Fellow status through promotion or the hiring process only results after consideration by an Urban Institute SRA/ Senior Fellow -review committee and approval by the president of the Institute.

**Institute Fellow**

Institute Fellows are designated by the president of the Institute and must have a broad-based national reputation for expertise on major issues on which their views, analysis, and commentary are sought out by the broad public policy world (including academics, political figures, journalists, and private sector individuals/ groups). They will often have held some prominent public/private-sector position. They will have evidenced an ability to interact competently with that broad public policy making world in a variety of forums and under public pressures. For example, they will frequently engage in the following activities:

• Interactions with the media (often quoted in print, on local and national radio and television);

• Speaking at high quality forums and gatherings focused on broad public policy — not just academic meetings;

• Writing substantive pieces for the serious popular press such as opinion editorials or articles for national news outlets (such as major newspapers, the Atlantic Monthly, Harpers, etc.)

• Serving (or having served) on government and private commissions, substantive panels, and/or advisory boards;

• Testifying before the Congress.