

University of California  
Specialist Series Toolkit

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Specialist Series, Effective July 1, 2015

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## **Characteristics of the Specialist Series at the University of California**

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### Academic Attributes

The Specialist is distinguished as an academic series in a number of ways. Specialists are engaged in research, and are expected to make scientific, scholarly, and substantive intellectual contributions to the research effort. Individuals appointed to the series are expected to have specialized education or training in a specific discipline, to contribute to the field of scientific or scholarly knowledge, and to attain stature in the professional and scientific community. Specialists contribute specialized knowledge and expertise in the planning and execution of research projects. They are often involved in the training and mentorship of junior-level researchers. Appointees in the Specialist series are assessed on their professional competence and activity, their University and public service, and the value and impact of their contributions to their area of research and their advancement of knowledge in the discipline as judged by other academics and scientists through a process of peer review.

### Primary Role

The Specialist makes substantive intellectual contributions to the research efforts with actual duties and percentages of effort dependent on the nature and course of the research and results. Individual efforts are expected to contribute to and advance the field of scientific knowledge.

### Measure of Performance

The primary measure of performance for the Specialist is the value and impact of the appointee's scientific/research contributions, professional competence and activities, and University and public service.

### Review Process

The review process for the Specialist is an academic peer review process. The Principal Investigator recommends, evaluates, and justifies the appointment, reappointment, merit increase, or promotion in the academic personnel review file every one to three years depending on the individual's rank and step. The review includes an assessment of the individual's contributions to the field of research and stature in the scientific community at-large including evidence of authored/co-authored papers, University and public service, and solicited confidential letters of evaluation from other academics in the field.

### **I. Definition**

The Specialist series is used for academic appointees who assist in research in specialized areas and who do not have any teaching responsibilities. See APM – 330 for systemwide policy on Specialists.

### **II. Ranks and Steps**

- A. Junior Specialist I-II
- B. Assistant Specialist I – III
- C. Associate Specialist I – IV
- D. Specialist I – V

### **III. Appointment Criteria**

Specialist appointments may be made to provide research projects with special skills, experience, and knowledge. At the Junior and Assistant levels, the appointee enables research as part of a team. At the Associate and full level, the appointee provides considerable independent input into the planning and execution of research.

In judging a candidate for appointment or promotion in this series, the following criteria are provided as guidelines and may be used flexibly where deemed necessary.

- A. Performance in research in specialized areas
- B. Professional competence and activity
- C. University and public service

### **IV. Term of Appointment**

- A. There are no limits on service at any level in this series.
- B. Appointments may be made for up to one year at a time.

### **V. Compensation**

- A. Individuals appointed to this series are compensated on the salary scales established for the Specialist series on a fiscal year basis.
- B. Off-scale salaries are permitted in the Specialist series.
- C. Salaries are subject to range adjustments.
- D. Each source that provides compensation for service in this series must permit research.

### VI. Advancement

#### A. Appointment

Appointment cases may be prepared using the Specialist appointment checklist in this toolkit. Particular attention should be paid to the analytical evaluation of the candidate and the candidate's accomplishments.

#### B. Advancement

Advancement cases may be prepared using the Specialist advancement checklist in this toolkit. All advancement cases are based on the individual's achievements and the availability of funding. Normal advancement will occur after one year at step at the Junior level, two years at step at the Assistant and Associate level, and after three years at the full Specialist level. Merits are based on the academic record since the time of the last review while promotions are based on the career academic record. Any advancement requested prior to that time is considered an acceleration.

#### C. Chair/Director Letters of Recommendation

The Chair/Director's letter of recommendation for merit or promotion should include an evaluation of the candidate's work and an evaluation of the candidate's contributions to the group effort, if relevant. In addition, recommendations for promotion must provide documentation of the scientific or creative contributions of the candidate. Each unit should establish set procedures for evaluation of Specialist series appointments and advancements and development of the letter of recommendation. While review done solely by the Director or the Principal Investigator is acceptable, a fuller review, including input from other equal or higher ranking individuals in the unit is preferable.

#### D. External Evaluation

External letters of evaluation may be required for some advancements. Campus policy should be consulted.

**ACADEMIC SPECIALIST/STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COMPARISON**

	<b>Junior, Assistant, Associate, and Full Specialist</b>	<b>Staff Research Associate I-IV</b>
<b>Position Type</b>	Academic	Staff
<b>Current Union Representation</b>	No	Yes, Research Support Staff (RX) - UPTe (levels I-IV)
<b>Responsibilities</b>	Research in specialized areas, professional activities, and University and public service. Expected to make substantive scientific, scholarly, and intellectual contributions to the research enterprise and to attain stature in the professional and scientific community. Contribute specialized knowledge and expertise in the planning and execution of research projects. Eligible to be a principal investigator on research grants.	Perform or supervise lab or field experimental procedures in support of academically supervised research. Participate in research activities at varying levels of difficulty/responsibility; however, are not eligible to serve as principal investigators. May participate, but are not assigned final responsibility for determining the nature and course of investigation, general methodological approaches, nor the scientific validity of research results.
<b>Supervised by</b>	Academic supervisor	Academic or staff supervisor
<b>Initiating Recruitment (this process may vary by campus)</b>	Academic hiring supervisor submits to department/divisional academic personnel coordinator request with draft posting, including outline of responsibilities, nature of research, qualifications, rank and terms of appointment.	Approved by staff human resources upon review of detailed job description, percentages of time, and qualifications.
<b>Classification</b>	Approved by dean (or other administrator as designated by the campus) upon review of responsibilities, intellectual/scientific contributions to the field, and qualifications. Academic appointees do not have pre-specified, detailed job descriptions as duties and percentages of effort change over time depending on the course and results of the research.	Approved by staff human resources or department via delegated authority if applicable (this process may vary by campus) upon review of detailed job description, percentages of time, and qualifications.
<b>Criteria for Appointment</b>	Performance in research in specialized area, professional competence and scope of professional activities, and University and public service. Bachelor's or advanced degree frequently required.	Meets qualifications and any special conditions of employment as reflected in the job description and series concept.

**ACADEMIC SPECIALIST/STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COMPARISON**

	<b>Junior, Assistant, Associate, and Full Specialist</b>	<b>Staff Research Associate I-IV</b>
<b>Hiring/Appointment Process</b>	At the conclusion of the recruitment, interviews, and selection, the principal investigator/director/department chair compiles appointment dossier including candidate's CV, funding information, and a letter of justification which recommends rank and step and briefly outlines responsibilities and nature of research, along with supporting letters of recommendation for designated ranks. Dean (or other administrator as designated by the campus) reviews the recruitment documentation and dossier, and issues appointment letter outlining the terms and conditions of appointment, including rank, step, and end date of appointment.	At the conclusion of recruitment, interviews, and selection, hiring supervisor extends an offer or requests staff human resources to extend an offer of employment. Normally hired at step based on their relevant years of education and experience, salary history, specialized skills or certification, as well as internal equity within the department. Other factors such as difficulty attracting qualified applicants for the position are also considered. All salary offers require staff human resources approval.
<b>Option for Without Salary Apptmt</b>	Yes	No
<b>Security of Employment</b>	Appointments are temporary with a specified ending date of normally one to three years. Reappointment is dependent on availability of funding and a positive review based on professional competence and activity, including the value and impact of the individual's contributions to the field, their advancement of knowledge in the discipline, and their University and public service as judged by other academics and scientists through a process of peer review. May be released prior to the end date due to poor performance only after taking appropriate corrective action.	Employees in career positions generally have indefinite appointments unless their position was contingent upon funding availability with a predetermined end date. Employees may be released due to poor performance only after taking appropriate corrective action.

**ACADEMIC SPECIALIST/STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COMPARISON**

	<b>Junior, Assistant, Associate, and Full Specialist</b>	<b>Staff Research Associate I-IV</b>
<b>Merit Increase</b>	<p>Salary increase within rank normally awarded at time of reappointment or on July 1, dependent on campus policy. Advances occur every one to three years depending on title, rank and step of the position (see academic salary scales for normal number of years at rank and step). Step increases are typically 5-10%. Requires merit/promotion dossier, including updated CV and letter from PI or department describing individual's professional competence and activity, including value and impact of contributions to their area of research, advancement of knowledge in the discipline, and their University and public service as judged by other academics and scientists through the peer review process. External letters of recommendation, department votes, Academic Senate review, and/or copies of publications required at some levels. Salary recommended by PI or department based on accomplishments and funding availability. Authority to approve merits depends on rank/step and may rest with the dean or executive vice chancellor and provost.</p>	<p>Salary increase within classification based on an annual performance evaluation and the outcome of collective bargaining. Merits are generally effective based on the collective bargaining agreement. Eligibility criteria generally include: must be in a career position, completed a probationary period, and received an overall rating of "satisfactory" (solid) or better on their last performance evaluation. Annual appraisals assess performance-based competencies, e.g. job knowledge, quality of work, productivity, flexibility, initiative, problem solving, teamwork, dependability, and interpersonal skills.</p>



**ACADEMIC SPECIALIST/STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COMPARISON**

	<b>Junior, Assistant, Associate, and Full Specialist</b>	<b>Staff Research Associate I-IV</b>
<b>Promotion/Reclass</b>	<p>Promotion is a change in rank normally awarded at time of reappointment (one to three years depending on title, rank and step; see academic salary scales for normal number of years at rank and step). Promotions typically represent a 5-10% salary increase. Requires a promotion/reappointment dossier including updated CV and letter from PI or department describing individual's professional competence and activity, including value and impact of individual's contributions to their area of research, advancement of knowledge in the discipline, and their University and public service as judged by other academics and scientists through a peer review process. External letters of recommendation, department votes, Academic Senate review, and/or copies of publications may be required at some levels. Salary recommended by PI/department based on accomplishments and funding availability. Authority to approve promotions depends on rank/step, resting with dean, evcp, or chancellor or other administrator as designated by the campus.</p>	<p>(1) Promotion for a staff employee is the change via open recruitment to another position which has a higher salary range maximum than the employee's current position.            (2) An upward reclass is a change in classification resulting from significant changes from a staff position to a staff position, when an employee assumes higher-level responsibilities while retaining some of the duties of their current position. A revised job description and other supporting documents are required. The classification decision is made by staff human resources or the department authority via delegated authority. Upon upward reclassification, an employee shall be granted at least a salary increase to the minimum of the salary range of the new class, with at least a four percent (4%) increase, provided that the new rate does not exceed the maximum of the new class. Union notification is required.</p>
<b>Other Salary Increases</b>	<p>Salary advancements to address retention, equity, etc. are dependent on campus policy.</p>	<p>Other within classification staff increases:            (1) Stipend - an increase provided when an employee who is temporarily assigned by the University to perform all of the functions of a position in a higher classification for 20 consecutive working days or more shall be paid as follows: Either one step over the regular salary, or the minimum of the higher position's range or at least four percent, whichever is higher.            (2) Equity increase - an increase is provided when new duties are assigned permanently which increases the complexity of the position (typically a new higher level job function is added) but reclass to a higher classification is not appropriate, or to address an inequity or retention situation. The normal salary increase for an equity is approximately 5-6% (this may vary by location depending upon budget availability).</p>

**ACADEMIC SPECIALIST/STAFF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COMPARISON**

	<b>Junior, Assistant, Associate, and Full Specialist</b>	<b>Staff Research Associate I-IV</b>
<b>Eligibility for Health and Welfare Benefits</b>	Same as SRA	Eligible for UC benefits (full, mid-level, core, or no benefits) depending on length and % time of appointment. Must be at least 43.75% time to receive any level of benefits. Employees appointed at least 50% for 12 months or more or who attain 1000 hours on pay status within a rolling 12-month period are automatically enrolled in the UC Retirement Program and are eligible for full benefits.
<b>Vacation</b>	Eligible to accrue if appointed for at least 6 months at 50% time or more. Accrue 16 hours per month if full-time regardless of length of service. Not eligible to accrue if drop below 50% time. Upon separation or transfer to a position that does not accrue vacation, employee is paid for any unused vacation.	Eligible to accrue if appointed for at least 6 months at 50% time or more. Accrue 10 hours per month if full-time and has less than 10 years of service. Accrual rate increases incrementally to a maximum rate of 16 hours per month after 20 years of service. After meeting eligibility criteria, part-time employees accrue proportionately even if they drop below 50% time. Upon separation or transfer to a position that does not accrue vacation, employee is paid for any unused vacation.
<b>Sick leave</b>	Same as SRA	Eligible to accrue if appointed 50% time or more. Full-time employees accrue 8 hours per month. Part-time employees appointed at least 50% accrue proportionate to their percent time.
<b>FLSA Exemption Status</b>	Exempt	Exempt and non-exempt
<b>Probationary Period</b>	None	Serves a six months' probationary period in which during this time, they may be released at sole discretion of the University. May receive up to six months credit toward completion of probationary period for time served in same or similar job on a temporary basis. Probationary period may be extended for up to three months.
<b>Layoff Provisions</b>	Appointees who are laid off or involuntarily reduced in time have preferential rehire and recall rights for a period of not more than one year. Severance pay is not an option.	Employees in career positions who are laid off or involuntarily reduced in time have preference for rehire and recall rights for a period of one to three years depending on their length of service. Employees may opt for severance pay in lieu of preferential rehire/recall or a combination of severance pay and preferential rehire/recall.

## Specialist Position Description Template

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\_\_\_\_\_ Specialist (insert specific rank and step)

### **Nature and Purpose**

*Brief paragraph describing scope of position and expectations for the individual fulfilling the role.*

### **Major Responsibilities**

- 1) Research (\_\_\_% Effort)

*Description of research activities related to experimental work, analysis, publication and grant acquisition, and research support*

- 2) Professional Competence and Activity (\_\_\_% Effort)

*Description of professional activities related to materials for and participation in meetings, seminars, professional/technical societies, other research and educational organizations, plus review of proposals, manuscripts, and publications*

- 3) University and Public Service (\_\_\_% Effort)

*Description of service activities related to liaison responsibilities with various organizations*

### **Qualifications**

*Description of specific education and experience required to perform the duties of the position.*

**Specialist Series Appointment Checklist (all levels)**

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT: \_\_\_\_\_

PROPOSED: \_\_\_\_\_ (Title, Step, %) SALARY: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT: \_\_\_\_\_ (Title, Step, %) SALARY: \_\_\_\_\_

EFFECTIVE: \_\_\_\_\_ (Begin and end dates)

**CHECKLIST**

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\_\_\_\_\_ Director's recommendation or concurrence

\_\_\_\_\_ Principal Investigator's/Supervisor's recommendation

Recommendation should include:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Qualifications of the candidate
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Evaluation of research activity, contributions to faculty research, publications, and professional competence and activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Evaluation of special honors and awards received, if any
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Explanation for urgency or lateness of case

\_\_\_\_\_ Updated Curriculum Vitae

\_\_\_\_\_ Recruitment Documentation (search or waiver)

\_\_\_\_\_ Search Summary

Summary must be separate from PI's/Director's recommendation and Include:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. description of activities to ensure consideration of minority and women applicants
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. bona fide list of applicants
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. explanation of the deselection of minority or women applicants
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. discussion comparing relative qualifications of finalists
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. discussion of consideration given to minority or women applicants presently holding related positions on campus. If none, how was position advertised on campus?
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. copy of published advertisement

UNIT CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone)

**Specialist Series Promotion Checklist (all levels)**

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT: \_\_\_\_\_

PROPOSED: \_\_\_\_\_ (Title, Step, %) SALARY: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT: \_\_\_\_\_ (Title, Step, %) SALARY: \_\_\_\_\_

EFFECTIVE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST ADVANCEMENT DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKLIST**

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\_\_\_\_\_ Director's recommendation or concurrence

\_\_\_\_\_ Principal Investigator's/Supervisor's recommendation

Recommendation should include:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Qualifications of the candidate
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Evaluation of research activity, contributions to faculty research, publications, and professional competence and activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Evaluation of University and public service
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Evaluation of special honors and awards received, if any
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If acceleration is recommended, state justification

\_\_\_\_\_ Candidate's Contribution

- \_\_\_\_\_ Standardized Curriculum Vitae
- \_\_\_\_\_ Supplementary Report, if any
- \_\_\_\_\_ Optional written statement

\_\_\_\_\_ Explanation of urgency/lateness of case

UNIT CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone)