

Columbia Law School
Guidance on Hiring and Appointing Research Assistants
(Revised August 2021)

Overview

Faculty often choose to hire research assistants to help with a range of research-related tasks for a defined project or period of time. This document provides guidance on eligibility, budget allocation, solicitation of applications, and the appointment process for research assistants.

Eligibility: Who May Serve?

The typical research assistant is a Columbia Law School student, either a J.D. or LL.M. candidate (though students from other Columbia University divisions may also be hired). Student research assistants are permitted to work a maximum of 20 hours per week during the school year. That limit is lifted during break periods (e.g., summer, spring recess).¹

In addition, in rare cases, persons other than Columbia students have served as research assistants, but the appointment process for such individuals is more complex and costs are often significantly higher than when appointing students.

Budget & Wage Rate

Effective September 1, 2021, all student research assistants will be paid at a rate of \$17.00 per hour.

Full-time faculty are entitled 400 hours of research assistance each fiscal year. The allocation of research assistant hours covers the full cost of the salary and fringe benefit expenses. Unused allocations are not eligible to be rolled over into a new fiscal year. Full-time faculty that are in residence for only part of the year will receive a prorated research assistance allocation.

When budgeting for research assistance outside of the 400-hour annual allowance, please note that fringe rates do apply to students working in the summer (8.15% fringe rate) and to non-student researchers (31.5% fringe rate for unrestricted CLS funds and 30.5% fringe rate for sponsored projects). Students working during the academic year do not incur a fringe charge.

Selecting a Research Assistant

Selection of research assistants is at the discretion of each faculty member. Some faculty choose to hire research assistants based on past experience (e.g., an exceptional student from a class in a previous semester) or on the referral of a colleague. Others prefer to solicit applications via an open and competitive process.

Effective January 1, 2018, faculty who wish to solicit applications for research assistant positions should do so via Symplicity—the centralized career portal utilized by both the Office of Career Services and Social Justice Initiatives. Faculty or their assistants should fill out this form (<https://forms.gle/Z3oNY7rCLBytEJvw5>) to initiate the process of posting a job description.

¹Please note that international students enrolled at Teachers College must obtain permission in advance from the Office of International Services at Teachers College.

Please note that, effective January 1, 2018, emails to the student email lists soliciting research assistants will no longer be sent. Instead, all such opportunities must be posted to Symplicity using the form linked above.

Should you have questions about the solicitation of applicants via Symplicity, please contact Julie Anna Alvarez in the Office of Career Services and Professional Development at (212) 854-2700 or jaa2236@columbia.edu.

Appointing and Hiring a Research Assistant

Once selected, student research assistants must complete required employment forms and submit them to the Human Resources Department in order to process their appointment.

Faculty should direct research assistant appointees to complete the New Hire Packet or the Rehire Packet found at the following link: <https://finance-admin.law.columbia.edu/content/forms-and-processes>. Appointees should then email their completed forms to Shartiss England at sengland@law.columbia.edu.

IMPORTANT: In accordance with Federal law, the I-9 form must be completed within 72 hours of the official start date. The I-9 form is used to verify identity and employment authorization to work in the United States.

Faculty members who wish to appoint non-student researchers should contact Human Resources at HR@law.columbia.edu for more information.

Payment and Timesheets

Payment for research assistants is on a bi-weekly schedule, which can be found at the following link: <https://humanresources.columbia.edu/content/2021-2022-morningside-payroll-calendar>

In order to be paid, research assistants must report all hours worked in our online Time & Labor and Absence Management (TLAM) System that will be approved by the faculty supervisors. If direct deposit is not setup, checks will be mailed to students' mailing address on file.

Human Resources Contact Information

Email: HR@law.columbia.edu

Tel.: (212) 854-5966

Office: William C. Warren Hall, 2nd Floor