

## NRC Research and Fellowship Programs

### Research Adviser Guide

As a Research Adviser in either the NRC Research Associateship Programs (RAP) or Air Force Science and Technology Fellowship Program (AF STFP), you play a key role in assuring that a Research Associate's/Fellow's tenure is not only productive but is also a meaningful step forward in their career development, providing a foundation for future success. Your guidance ensures that the Associate's/Fellow's work in the laboratory enhances and complements existing research efforts and contributes to the overall mission of the agency.

The following sections will provide guidance to support your role as a Research Adviser. For inquiries or more information about specific policies guiding the administration of the program, please contact the Office of Fellowships ([rap@nas.edu](mailto:rap@nas.edu)).

### Eligibility and Role of a Research Adviser

To become a Research Adviser, candidates must:

- Hold a research doctorate (conferred at least five years prior to application)
- Possess a minimum of five years of research experience beyond their doctoral studies
- Demonstrate an active publication record

Once approved, as a Research Adviser to a Postdoctoral Research Associate/Fellow, your role is similar to that of a principal investigator to a postdoctoral fellow at a research university, encompassing guidance, mentorship, and oversight of their research endeavors. Like guiding a postdoc in an academic setting, your support will involve fostering their intellectual growth, facilitating their integration into the research community, and helping them navigate the challenges and opportunities inherent in this critical phase of their career development.

As a Research Adviser to a Senior Research Associate/Fellow, your relationship to them is akin to that of a professional colleague, engaging with them as a peer and valuing their expertise and insights. This collaborative approach fosters open dialogue and mutual respect, reflecting a partnership that recognizes the Senior Research Associate's/Fellow's advanced skills and contributions to the field.

All Research Advisers are expected to assist the Research Associate/Fellow in acclimating to the laboratory environment, procuring equipment, securing technical support, and obtaining access to any additional resources. Furthermore, understanding that a Research Associate's/Fellow's subsequent career will be deeply influenced by their publication record, you are expected to provide guidance and support to help them publish effectively and advance in their field. Beyond academic guidance, your encouragement and mentorship is vital to guide a Research Associate/Fellow in their growth as a researcher.

## Program Communication and Administration

The majority of program-related communication is handled between the Laboratory Program Representative (LPR) at the sponsoring agency and the program staff of the Office of Fellowships at the National Academies. The LPR coordinates the Research Opportunities, approves new Research Advisers, and handles the day-to-day administrative details concerning the program at the laboratory. Any request to the Office of Fellowships for expenditure of program funds administered by the National Academies must have the approval of the LPR.

The LPR serves as the foremost representative for the program at each sponsoring laboratory and stands as the initial point of contact for any inquiries or concerns related to the program. As a Research Adviser, you are welcome to contact the Office of Fellowships ([rap@nas.edu](mailto:rap@nas.edu)) as needed for any guidance or support; however, Office of Fellowships staff will typically call upon the LPR to assist in the resolution of any problems related to an Associate's/Fellow's award.

## Research Opportunities

You must submit new or revised Research Opportunities through InfoRAP for approval by the Office of Fellowships and your agency's LPR before they can be made available online to potential applicants. Research Opportunities may be added, revised, deactivated, or archived at any time throughout the year. Approved Research Advisers should contact [rap@nas.edu](mailto:rap@nas.edu) if they require their login credentials to complete the actions below.

### *Creating a New Research Opportunity*

1. [Sign in to InfoRAP](#).
2. Select **RAP Lab Opportunity**.
3. Select **create a new opportunity or add yourself to existing opportunity...** located under your list of research opportunities.
4. Select your division from the drop down under **Participating Agency/Program**.
5. Enter the title of your research opportunity.
6. Enter keywords separated by semicolons.
7. Enter the text of your research opportunity.
8. Select the **save** button to save the information entered.
9. Select the **save and send** button to forward your submission to the Office of Fellowships for processing.

### *Requesting to be Added as a Research Adviser for an Existing Research Opportunity*

1. [Sign in to InfoRAP](#).
2. Select **RAP Lab Opportunity**.
3. Select **create a new opportunity or add yourself to existing opportunity...** located under your list of research opportunities.
4. Select your division from the dropdown list under **Participating Agency/Program**.
5. Select the Research Opportunity you wish to be added to from the dropdown list under **Research Opportunity**. (Note: You will not be able to make any edits to the existing Research Opportunity until you have been approved to be added to the existing Research Opportunity.)

6. Select the **save** button to save the information selected.
7. Select the **save and submit** button to forward your request to the Office of Fellowships for processing.

#### *Revising the Content of an Existing Research Opportunity*

1. [Sign in to InfoRAP](#).
2. Select **RAP Lab Opportunity**.
3. Locate the research opportunity you wish to revise and select the vertical ellipsis (:) to the right of **active** or not active in the far-right column to open the ACTIONS box.
4. Select **edit opportunity** to open the form.
5. Edit the title, keywords, and the text of the research opportunity (as applicable). *Note: If you will be making significant content revisions, please opt to request a change in status for the research opportunity (refer to section below) and create a new research opportunity (refer to section above).*
6. Select the **save** button to save the revised information.
7. Select the **save and submit** button to forward your request to the Office of Fellowships for processing.

#### *Requesting a Change in Status for an Existing Research Opportunity*

1. [Sign in to InfoRAP](#).
2. Select **RAP Lab Opportunity**.
3. Locate the research opportunity you wish to revise and select the vertical ellipsis (:) to the right of **active** or not active in the far-right column to open the ACTIONS box.
4. Select one of the following actions for research opportunities listed as **active** to request a change in status:
  1. **Deactivate** – Deactivated research opportunities are not publicly viewable online and are not available for applicants to select in online applications. They appear in your list as not active.
  2. **Archive** – Archived research opportunities are not publicly viewable online and are not available for applicants to select in online applications. They do not appear in your list and remain dormant in the research opportunity database.
5. Select one of the following actions for research opportunities listed as **not active**
  1. **Activate** – Active research opportunities are publicly viewable online and are available for applicants to select in online applications. They appear in your list as **active**.
  2. **Archive** – Archived RO's are not publicly viewable online and are not available for applicants to select in online applications. They do not appear in your list and remain dormant in the research opportunity database.
6. Confirm the request to send a notification to the Office of Fellowships to process the change.

## **Fiscal Matters**

*This section does not apply to NIST Research Advisers and Associates.*

All funds to conduct the Fellowship/Associateship program at a laboratory are provided to the National Academies by means of a contract or cooperative agreement (CA) with the agency. The contract or CA allocates funds for various expenses, including stipends, allowances for relocation and travel, and contributions toward a health insurance program. Details about the various expenses are

provided below to assist you in your role as a Research Adviser with a Research Associate/Fellow on tenure. *Please note that this information is intended as a guide and may not cover all specific circumstances or contingencies.*

**Stipend** - The annual base stipend for new doctoral graduates receiving an award is determined by the sponsoring agency. This stipend is advertised in the details of each Research Opportunity for a specific laboratory or agency. Some sponsoring laboratories may offer increments for each year an awardee has held the doctorate at the time of application, for a specific field of study, and for a cost-of-living differential. The Office of Fellowships usually advises sponsoring agencies to regularly increase their base stipend level, aligning it with inflation and any increases in the cost of living.

**Relocation Assistance** - Research Associates/Fellows are reimbursed for allowable expenses incurred in relocating from their current place of residence to the vicinity of the laboratory if the laboratory is more than 50 miles from their address at the time of the award offer. Relocation expenses are paid or reimbursed in accordance with Federal Travel Regulations and Joint Travel Regulations. Expenses include up to seven days of per diem and may be used, in part, for one house-hunting trip.

For appointments of six months or longer, travel expenses for immediate family members are also reimbursed. Domestic movement of household goods is performed by a national moving company that contracts with the National Academies. Those relocating from and returning to foreign countries and Senior Research Associates/Fellows on leave from a permanent position are usually reimbursed for return relocation. The cost of relocation travel includes a number of variables: number of persons relocating, mode of relocation, days required for relocation, distance of move, and options for movement of household goods. Initial budget estimates for movement of household goods are based on the maximum possible expenses that might be incurred.

**Professional Travel** - Research Associates/Fellows are given a travel allowance to attend scientific meetings and for professional training. As with the base stipend, the exact amount of the travel allowance is determined by the sponsoring laboratory. All professional travel is approved using a Travel Authorization Request form that must be approved by the Research Adviser. Travel expense reimbursement is requested on a Travel Expense Report (TER) accessible in the Workday Expense system. Travel reimbursement adheres to Federal Travel Regulations, the Fly America Act, and other published policies regarding travel, and payment is issued directly to the Research Associate/Fellow. For more information regarding travel policies, please refer to the [Travel and Professional Development Guide](#).

**Health Insurance** - The National Academies negotiate coverage for all Research Associates/Fellows with a health insurance company on a cost-participation basis with each sponsoring agency. Under this plan, participating Research Associates/Fellows pay a portion of the premium, and the remaining balance is paid by the sponsoring agency. Like all health insurance plans, premiums are adjusted periodically and are published for each program year.

## Staff Visits

The Office of Fellowships conducts periodic staff visits to participating laboratories as needed to maintain good communication and to ensure that program objectives are being met. Staff visits are arranged by the LPR and the program staff of the Office of Fellowships. These visits give Research Advisers and Research Associates/Fellows the opportunity to meet with staff from the Office of Fellowships to discuss the program and provide any feedback that can be used to improve the quality of the program.

## Program Promotion and Recruitment of Applicants

The Office of Fellowships collaborates with laboratory staff to attract top-tier scientists and engineers. This outreach includes online and print promotions, as well as attendance and recruitment booths at scientific conferences, career fairs, and professional meetings. As a Research Adviser, it's vital to leverage your professional network at scientific conferences to highlight opportunities within your laboratory. If you require any outreach materials to distribute, please contact the Office of Fellowships Office Marketing and Outreach Team at [FellowshipsOfficeOutreach@nas.edu](mailto:FellowshipsOfficeOutreach@nas.edu).

## Application and Review Processes

*Preparing the Application* - As an initial step, prospective applicants are encouraged to select one or more Research Opportunities listed in the InfoRAP database and to contact the corresponding Research Advisers to discuss ideas for specific research projects. The idea and development of the written proposal for the project should be generated solely by the applicant. You may offer scientific or technical advice and may provide an informal review of the proposal; however, you should not play a substantive role in the creation of the research proposal on behalf of the applicant.

*Laboratory/Center Review Form* - You will be responsible for reviewing applications submitted to your Research Opportunity and asked to comment on:

- The proposed project's relevance to your agency's mission
- The applicant's specific skills and the innovative aspects of the proposal that will contribute to the project's success
- Professional development opportunities available to the applicant if selected for an award
- Your input in the development of the research proposal
- The availability of equipment and facilities to support the proposed research

After the Research Adviser's review of the application(s), the LPR will be asked to affirm their interest and support for the project. This recommendation allows the application(s) to proceed to review by the scientists and engineers that make up the RAP/AF STFP review panels.

*Panel Review* - The Office of Fellowships assembles panels of subject-matter experts to evaluate and score applications during quarterly reviews. Each application is read by at least three reviewers and

some applications, depending on their inter-disciplinary scope, may be read by reviewers across two or more panels.

*Roster of Recommended Candidates* - After all applications are scored, a roster of recommended candidates is made available to the LPR. Applicants are divided into Quality Groups of A, B, and C on each roster. Applicants in the A and B categories are recommended for awards, with the higher scoring applicants being given priority. Applicants in the C category are not recommended but may reapply in any subsequent review. Applicants who receive a score below a C are not eligible to reapply for one year, allowing time to strengthen a future application.

## Awards

*Processing Awards* - After receiving a roster of approved applicants, the LPR may authorize awards through InfoRAP. Awards are typically made to applicants in Quality Group A before any offers are made to applicants in Quality Group B. However, each sponsoring laboratory has its own award determination process. Please consult with your LPR for specific details.

*Notification of Awards* - Once the LPR authorizes awards, award offers are extended to the approved applicants by the Office of Fellowships. The award notification is sent via email and includes a link to the InfoRAP award management portal where the awardee can accept or decline the award. Once the award has been accepted, the applicant can enter a proposed start date and begin completing certain contingencies and laboratory requirements. New awardees are provided information and guidance on program policies and procedures including relocation, movement of household goods (if applicable), professional travel, health insurance, and direct deposit payments.

*Terms and Conditions of Awards* - The awardee must fulfill certain contingencies prior to starting tenure. All awardees must provide proof of obtaining a doctoral degree and, typically, must complete a security review for access to the laboratory and other facilities. Foreign nationals must also provide proof of holding an appropriate visa.

## First Day at the Laboratory

*Start Date Notification* - On the first day in the laboratory, the Research Associate/Fellow must complete the Start Date workflow in the InfoRAP award management portal. Upon submission by the Research Associate/Fellow, you, as the Research Adviser, will receive an email notification requesting that you confirm that the Research Associate/Fellow has reported to the laboratory or other remote station. This confirmation is required before stipend payments can be distributed.

*Orientation to the Laboratory* - Since each sponsoring laboratory has a unique environment and safety requirements, you are expected to provide orientation materials to any Research Associates/Fellows who are starting tenure in your lab. Additionally, please ensure that the Research Associate/Fellow is informed about any safety training that is required for them to conduct their research.

## Six-Month Assessment

Research Associates/Fellows are requested to submit a six-month assessment of their Associateship/Fellowship related to their onboarding, laboratory orientation, and on-tenure experiences. This survey allows them to communicate how their Research Adviser and the sponsoring agency have supported their establishment in the laboratory and enables the Office of Fellowships to evaluate the quality and value of the program. Responses are confidential; however, the Office of Fellowships will follow up with the LPR if matters of concern are raised.

## Professional Travel

Research Associates/Fellows are encouraged to attend and/or participate in professional meetings. Prior to travel, a Travel Authorization Request form must be completed by the Research Associate/Fellow, approved by the Research Adviser, and submitted to the Office of Fellowships. Once approved by the Office of Fellowships, the Research Associate/Fellow is authorized and encouraged to order prepaid tickets from the travel agency with whom the National Academies have contracted. Foreign travel requires additional approval by the National Academies, and in some cases, the sponsoring agency.

Travel to collect data or use equipment or facilities at other locations is sometimes paid by the sponsoring laboratory, either directly to the Research Associate/Fellow through invitational travel orders or by a supplement.

## Award Renewal

An initial award for a postdoctoral Research Associate/Fellow is for 12 months, renewable for additional 12-month periods, up to a maximum of 36 months, depending on the laboratory or agency. In special cases, extensions for periods of less than twelve months can be considered. Senior Research Associate/Fellow awards and renewals may be as short as three months and may include a gap of up to one year between the initial award and the renewal.

You and your Research Associate/Fellow will be notified approximately 90 days before the expiration date of the Research Associate's/Fellow's tenure. If you and the Research Associate/Fellow express mutual interest in renewal or extension, the Research Associate/Fellow must complete and submit an online application form, which will be sent to you for approval. The LPR must authorize the renewal or extension. If a laboratory does not plan to recommend renewal or extension, the Research Associate/Fellow should be notified at least four to six months before the end of tenure to allow for the arrangement of follow-on employment.

## Final Report

Before the last day of tenure, a Research Associate/Fellow is required to submit a Final Report. These reports assist the Office of Fellowships in assessing the overall quality of the Associate's/Fellow's research experience and the impact of the Research Associate's/Fellow's scientific productivity to the laboratory. The National Academies are contractually obligated to submit final reports to the sponsoring agency.

## Assistance with Career Placement

One of the primary objectives of RAP and AF STFP is to enhance the careers of the participants. As a Research Adviser, you play an important role in guiding postdoctoral Research Associates/Fellows toward challenging and rewarding professional employment. Research Advisers frequently have extensive professional contacts with other scientists and administrators at universities, in private industry, and in other government agencies. These contacts can serve as a network for Research Associates/Fellows seeking career placement. You are encouraged to play an active role in assisting Research Associates/Fellows nearing the end of their tenure by identifying employment opportunities consistent with their professional qualifications and aspirations.