

Research Faculty Hiring Guidance & Classification Criteria

Effective Date: September 1, 2026

Administrative Authority: Office of the Vice Provost of Faculty (OVPF)

Applies to: All new Research Faculty job postings, direct hires/limited-term appointments.

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1. Background and Purpose

As part of Georgia Tech's efforts to ensure clarity, fairness, and appropriate alignment of Research Faculty (RF) classifications, we are applying criteria used to review current research faculty to new and future research faculty positions. This guidance is intended to state clear eligibility criteria, providing a hiring decision tree, identify required documentation and reviews, and provide a succinct checklist that **must be completed before a new research faculty job requisition/opening is created or advertised or prior to appointment approval in the case of a non-competitive, limited-term hire.**

The Research Faculty designation is reserved for roles where the primary function is the technical execution, leadership, delivery and/or application of research. Roles that primarily provide administrative, operational, IT, or management support to the research enterprise must be classified as Staff.

Note: This guidance does not replace existing rank qualification policy standards; it adds a mandatory criteria review step to reduce misclassification risk.

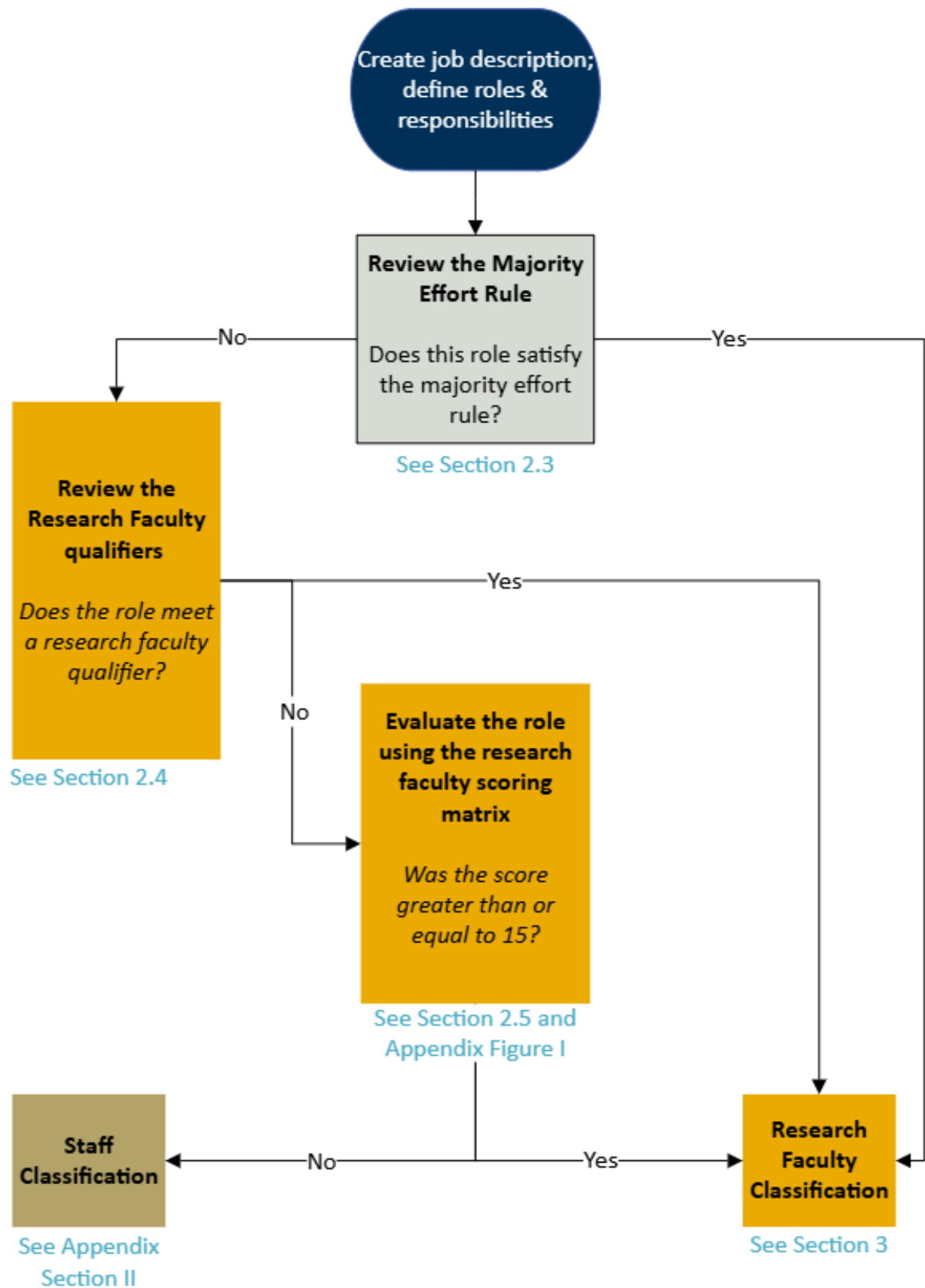
For more information on current Research Faculty Hiring and Promotion Guidelines and the Definitions of Research Faculty Positions, please visit the sites linked below.

- **Policy 3.2.1 - Research Faculty Hiring and Promotion Guidelines**
- **Categories of Research Faculty Positions**

2. Research Faculty Framework & Determination

2.1 Role Classification Decision Tree

The flowchart detailed below will be used along with the guidance shared across Section 2 and Section 3 of this document to determine which classification best fits the role being reviewed.



2.2 Definition of Research Faculty

Research faculty are faculty members whose primary responsibilities is to demonstrate technical mastery of a complex field.

They engage in investigation, technical development, application, and delivery of scientific and scholarly products and activities in support of the Institute's research mission.

Research faculty are engaged in the conception, execution, translation, and dissemination of research, scholarship and original, creative contributions characterized by contributing to the body of knowledge in their respective field.

Their work typically includes designing and conducting research projects; developing, testing, and applying new methods, technologies, or systems; analyzing and interpreting data; authoring scholarly publications, reports, and grant proposals; and supporting the translation of research results into practical, educational, or societal applications.

Research Faculty outputs and deliverables can vary widely, ranging from traditional scholarly publications and securing grant/contract funding to deployed programs, processes, and systems. Other products and contributions might include translating basic research for the benefit of society in the form of productization/commercialization, community engagement, crafting public policy, or economic development.

Research faculty appointments are contingent on the availability of funding, frequently supported by grants, contracts, or other external sources, and continuation of appointment is generally tied to sustained research productivity and funding success.

See Appendix Section II for Staff Criteria

2.3 Majority Effort Rule Determination

At the outset of establishing a Researcher vacancy, the Hiring Manager should collaborate with unit HR/Talent Acquisition to consider how the majority of an employee's time will be spent. Research faculty are expected to have research and the technical functions of carrying out research as their principal assignment. The **Majority Effort Rule** should be the first line of consideration in deciding if a role might be Research Faculty; if the duties of a vacancy meet the Majority Effort rule, no further evaluation is required.

Majority Effort Rule: Duties aligned with those listed above in Section 2.2 constitute more than 50% of the role's expected duties and outputs.

2.4 Research Faculty Qualifiers

If a position meets **at least one** of the criteria below, documentation must be attached to substantiate the qualifier. The Research Faculty Qualifiers are:

- **Principal Investigator Status:** The position is expected to serve as Principal Investigator (PI)/Project Director (PD) or Co-PI/PD on sponsored research projects, as documented in the position profile and unit plan. Per, the Project Director/Investigator is an individual responsible for the overall design, conduct and reporting of the research or other externally funded sponsored activity. “May serve” or “eligible to serve” is insufficient. The Project Director/Investigator is an individual responsible for the overall design, conduct and reporting of the research or other externally funded sponsored activity. “May serve” or “eligible to serve” is insufficient.
- **Leadership of Research Function:** The position directs the scientific, technical, or scholarly agenda of a research center, laboratory, or core facility. Operational or administrative management alone does not qualify.
- **Program Leadership:** The position leads programs whose primary outputs are research findings, applied methodologies, or technology transfer deliverables. Program coordination without technical leadership does not qualify.

If the role meets any of the above qualifiers no further evaluation is required, proceed to **Section 3. Research Faculty Classification Checklist** prior to posting the position (Scoring Matrix not required).

Note: For Research Faculty in GTRI, all approved positions and associated working titles can be found in the SalRaise system.

2.5 Research Faculty Scoring Matrix

A copy of the scoring matrix can be found in the appendix of this document.

If the role does not meet any of the above Research Faculty Qualifiers as outlined in section 2.4 above, then the **Research Faculty Scoring Matrix** will be used as a final step in determining a role’s proper classification. The role should be evaluated against six dimensions, commensurate with the expected rank of the position. The six dimensions include: technical research knowledge, specialized research expertise, leadership on internal or external projects, thought leadership in the field, directing complex or technical projects, and executing research work.

The Hiring Manager and HR Business Partner will evaluate the proposed role using the matrix:

- A total score of **15 or higher** means the proposed role shall be classified as **Research Faculty**. The Hiring Manager and HR Business Partner can proceed to **Section 3. Research Faculty Classification Checklist**.
- A total score of **less than 15** means the position must be classified as **Staff**.

3. Research Faculty Classification Checklist (Pre-Posting)

Please visit the [Office of Faculty Affairs website](#) for a formatted and fillable version of the Classification Checklist.

Instructions: Checklist must be completed prior to submitting a Job Opening request (in Careers or PageUp) or a GT-TRACS Appointment Package for a non-competitive hire. Include all required attachments for review and validation by the Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA). The Hiring Manager must complete the checklist, and the Unit HR Partner or Leader must review it.

Position Title: _____ **Hiring Unit:** _____

Pre-Qualifying question:

☐ **GTRI** – Is Title approved in SalRaise

☐ **ALL OTHERS:** Is this a direct backfill for a role previously approved under this criteria?

(**Note:** Bypassing this required checklist is acceptable for positions with no changes to requirements and responsibilities previously approved under this criteria.)

If so, provide date of last approval below and proceed to end of checklist for signatures.

Date of last validation: _____

1. Effort and Primary Duty Alignment Check

☐ **Primary Duties (Section 2.2):** Primary/essential duties are aligned with the definition of Research Faculty

☐ **Majority Effort Rule (Section 2.3):** Research, scholarly, technical, or extension activities constitute more than 50% of the role's expected duties and outputs.

2. Classification Validation (If Applicable)

☐ **Position meets Research Faculty Qualifiers (Section 2.4)**

Identify Qualifier _____

☐ **Position scored 15+ on the Scoring Matrix (Section 2.5, If Applicable)**

Total Score: _____ (Attach completed scoring rubric)

Brief justification (1-2 sentences) explaining why this role meets the Research Faculty classification:

3. Job Description / Profile Alignment

☐ Research execution, leadership, or technical delivery constitutes the primary function of the role (>50% of expected duties and outputs), based on the position's responsibilities rather than the incumbent's background.

☐ The minimum qualifications (degree and experience) align with the Faculty Handbook requirements for the proposed rank.

Required Attachment:

☐ Draft posting/profile text attached, including primary/essential duties, technical deliverables, and estimated allocation of effort by function.

4. Funding Confirmation

☐ Funding source has been verified and aligns with the nature of the appointment.

5. Review

☐ **Hiring Manager Review:** This role requires technical research expertise and functions as a faculty peer in the research enterprise.

☐ **Unit HR Partner or Leader Review:** I have reviewed this request against the Office of Faculty Affairs Research Faculty criteria for classification consistency.

6. Submission Completeness Verification

☐ Signed Research Faculty Classification Checklist

☐ Draft posting/profile text attached

☐ Scoring Matrix attached (if applicable)

Hiring Manager Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Unit HR Partner/Leader Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

OFA Validation - Upload this signed checklist and all required attachments as supporting documents to Careers Job Opening or PageUp Requisition for competitive hires, or GT-TRACS Appointment Package for non-competitive hires for review; standard review and response times apply.

Appendix

Please visit the [Office of Faculty Affairs website](#) for a formatted and fillable version of the Scoring Matrix.

Figure I. Research Faculty Scoring Matrix

Category	Rubric Criteria	Score
Technical Research Knowledge	Basic research knowledge, applicable to a broad range of tasks	1
	Solid understanding, applicable to specific tasks within their research domain	2
	For their experience and rank, they demonstrate deep understanding, applicable to complex tasks within their research domain	3
	For their experience and rank, they demonstrate expert-level understanding, applicable to leading research and/or research activities	4
Specialized Research Expertise	Basic skills easily transferrable skills, applicable to various areas	1
	Skills specific to the research/scholarly area, with potential for transfer to related areas	2
	For their experience and rank, they have advanced skills specific to research/scholarship, not easily transferable	3
	For their experience and rank, they have expert-level skills specific to the research/scholarly area, with significant impact on project deliverables and/or thought leadership	4
Leadership (Non-PI) on Internal or External project(s) OR Primary Instructor of Record in Discipline-Specific Courses in Area of Research Expertise	Provides basic support in sponsor communication and outreach	1
	Actively participates in sponsor meetings and discussions	2
	Plays a significant role in developing and maintaining sponsor relationships	3
	For their experience and rank, they take initiative and leadership in sponsor engagement activities and internal projects OR they are/were a primary instructor of record within the past 5 years for discipline-specific courses in area of research expertise	4
Thought Leadership in their Scholarly or Research Field; or Devising Research Strategy	Follows established protocols and implements existing strategies	1
	Provides input in developing strategies	2
	Offers innovative ideas and actively shapes direction	3
	Takes primary responsibility for formulating and communicating strategies	4
Directing Complex/Technical Projects or Efforts	Follows instructions and completes assigned tasks independently	1
	Assists in research tasks and contributes to team dynamics	2
	Leads specific tasks and provides guidance to team members; provides instruction to other research team members	3
	Oversees the overall process and manages teams; provides instruction to other research team members	4
Executing Research Work	Performs routine tasks under close supervision OR not applicable.	1
	Applies skills to complete assigned tasks under general guidance	2
	Independently conducts tasks and contributes to complex project deliverables	3
	Develops and implements methodologies, leading the execution of project tasks	4

Section II. Alignment of Primary Duties (Staff Criteria)

When evaluating the classification of a Research role, the primary and/or essential duties and responsibilities of the role should be defined. If the primary/essential duties of the position fall into any of the following categories, the role must be classified as Staff:

- General administrative support (scheduling, travel, procurement, business operations, office management).
- General IT support (desktop support, standard network maintenance not tied to specific research deliverables).
- Financial management or grant/contracts administration (post-award accounting, general business accounting, compliance monitoring without technical contribution).
- Project management focused on timelines/budgets without technical research oversight.