

MEMO

DATE: 25 June 2023

FROM: Nina F. Schor, M.D., Ph.D.
Deputy Director for Intramural Research
National Institutes of Health

RE: NIH Staff Scientists titles of Associate Scientist and Senior Associate Scientist – academic equivalents

A Staff Scientist at the NIH is an NIH employee usually appointed to a non-tenure track, renewable position. Staff Scientists hold doctoral degrees and are selected by an Institute or Center (IC) to support the long-term research of a specific Senior Investigator or to run a specific core facility. Those who work for a specific Senior Investigator generally do not receive independent resources, but they work independently and have sophisticated skills and knowledge essential to the work of the laboratory; independently design experiments; and guide the day-to-day work of students and trainees in the laboratory. Those who run core facilities do manage the budget of that facility and often have up to 25% of their time to conduct or participate in research related to the core facility's area of science. Staff Scientists are analogous to research track faculty in most U.S. medical school departments.

The Intramural Research Program has established the titles of Associate Scientist and Senior Associate Scientist to signify and acknowledge Staff Scientists who have achieved successively higher levels of expertise, skill, and independence. As the specific roles and duties of Staff Scientists vary from IC to IC (see https://oir.nih.gov/system/files/media/file/2021-08/staff_scientists-range_services_provided.pdf), the conferral of these titles is decided at the IC level. However, the process and criteria for such conferral have been determined and specified at the NIH-wide level (see <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel/policies-recruitment-processes/fair-review-principles-nominations-staff-scientists-associate-scientist>). The designations of Associate Scientist and Senior Associate Scientist are the equivalent of Research Associate Professor and Research Professor, respectively, in most U.S. medical school departments.