

WORK-STUDY RESEARCH ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Guidelines for Faculty Posting a Research Assistant Position 2023-24



Program Overview

The Work-Study Research Assistant Program is designed to help students with financial need develop research skills and explore their academic interests. Our expectation is that the research assistant will be substantively engaged in your research/creative endeavors. These positions are not to be exclusively clerical or lab upkeep positions.

Federal Work-Study

Work-Study is a need-based financial aid program, through which students can earn the designated amount of the award through employment in an eligible position. Funds are limited and are awarded based on financial need and order of application filing date to eligible full-time students who submitted a FAFSA by the federal on-time deadline. Students may only earn up to the limit of their Work-Study awards for the period of the award (semester or academic year). The average award for 2023-24 is \$3,000. For most students, working an average of **6-7 hours per week** over the course of the entire academic year will allow them to earn their full award amount.

Developing a Work-Study Research Assistant Position

We encourage faculty to ***consider the following*** as you determine whether you can commit to hiring and mentoring a research assistant through this program:

- The modality of the position. Consider whether the position you are submitting requires the student to be fully in-person to complete the job responsibilities or whether some work activities may be completed remotely. It is important that the brief description clearly indicate whether the position is in-person, partially in-person, or fully remote. If the position is a virtual one, consider whether you would like the position to be advertised to UConn students across all campuses or only at your home campus. Also consider whether you will be able to mentor and guide a student through the necessary training to accomplish this work remotely. Note: Some past students in virtual positions have expressed feeling less of a sense of community and engagement in their work, so we encourage mentors of virtual positions to take proactive steps to integrate their student(s) into collaborative work, research group meetings, and other relationship-building activities.
- The number of students you wish to hire. Be realistic and keep in mind that the student(s) will need training, supervision, feedback, and guidance on an ongoing basis. Please be sure that you will be available to mentor the student and that there will be a sufficient volume of work across both the fall and the spring semester – 15 weeks for each semester and a minimum of 6 hours of work per week.
- The availability of *adequate, ongoing work* for a student research assistant. Feedback from students suggests that many become frustrated when there is a lack of work or too many research assistants for the volume of work available. Consider what secondary work tasks would be appropriate if there is no new data to enter/analyze, subjects to run, etc. You could, for instance, have your research assistant read relevant literature

or other documents, or develop their skills through practice with sample materials, when higher priority tasks are not available. Students' ability to earn their Work-Study awards to cover their expenses depends on work being available consistently.

- The skills necessary for your position, as well as your willingness to train/mentor students through the learning process.
- The potential for growth for a student research assistant in this position. Do you see opportunities for additional responsibility, learning of basic and advanced techniques, development of a more independent project, etc.? Will they have the opportunity to publish, present their research (on or off campus), and/or apply for funding to support the continuation of their research?
- Supervision and collaboration. Will there be anyone, in addition to yourself, who will supervise and assign tasks to the research assistant? Will other faculty members, post-docs, or graduate students work with the research assistant? If yes, have you discussed the hiring of a work-study research assistant with these individuals? What will be the nature of the research assistant's collaboration with other members of your research group?
- Previous work experience. First year students (and other work-study students) may not have previous employment experience. Be realistic about the qualifications that you are seeking and focus on transferable skills and [Career Competencies](#) that are needed within the role. If you are seeking a student with more advanced skills (e.g., programming, lab techniques), contact OUR to discuss whether a Class III position might be more appropriate. Federal Work-Study is awarded to a relatively small group of undergraduate students, so you may not find students with the specific, advanced qualifications that you are seeking.
- The appeal of your position for a student. Why would a student want your position? What skills/competencies will they learn/develop that will help them be successful in their future careers? Are they going to receive thoughtful feedback that is going to help them grow?
- Job description. Faculty will develop a job description within the online [WSRAP Submission Form](#) using whichever of the Class II research job codes is most appropriate to the expected work. General tasks for each research job code are listed here:
 - [Student Equipment Design & Testing Assistant \(201\)](#)
 - [Student Interview & Survey Research Assistant \(202\)](#)
 - [Student Laboratory & Field Analysis Assistant \(203\)](#)
 - [Student Human Behavioral Research Assistant \(204\)](#)
 - [Student Research Review Assistant \(205\)](#)

Submission of your Work-Study Research Assistant Job Description

Research assistant opportunities may be submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) through the online [WSRAP Submission Form](#). We encourage faculty to submit research assistant opportunities early in the summer; opportunities will not be accepted for posting after August 7, 2023. Work-study students are actively seeking positions for the upcoming academic year during the summer months and early postings will likely elicit a greater number of

applications. It is important that faculty are available to review applications and interview students once the research assistant position is posted.

Faculty should review the relevant student research job description templates (201, 202, 203, 204, or 205), which they can access at ugradresearch.uconn.edu/work-study/faculty/ or via the links above to determine the one most appropriate to their research activities. They will select the relevant template within the [WSRAP Submission Form](#) and customize the job description there.

Off-Campus Travel

Travel to off-campus research locations raises a number of policy and process concerns:

- The student needs to be reimbursed for *any travel expenses* s/he incurs (e.g., mileage, bus fare), and neither work-study nor OUR can cover those costs.
- The student must be compensated for *travel time*, but neither work-study nor OUR can cover those costs.
- Your department would need to designate funds to cover travel costs and would need to handle the reimbursement process, which involves setting up a separate payroll line for the student to be paid for travel time and expenses from another source.
- In addition to reimbursement and payment, there is the matter of minimum insurance coverages for a student driving his/her own vehicle, or for any driver transporting that student. Per Connecticut's Policy on Motor Vehicles Used for State Business, drivers of personally-owned vehicles traveling on university business must carry at least the minimum insurance coverage (third party liability: \$50,000/\$100,000; property damage liability: \$5,000).

We strongly advise against involving WSRAP students in off-campus travel unless you and/or your department is willing to cover the associated costs.