



EXTENSION
College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources

University of Nevada, Reno Extension Role Guidelines for Specialists

These guidelines are designed to help Specialists understand their role and how their activities relate to three core areas: 1) Teaching; 2) Research; and 3) Service. This document should be used in crafting role statements. This document will also be used in the annual evaluation, promotion, and tenure process to help communicate the unique role of Specialists in the University. These guidelines are not considered mandates, but a compilation of potential roles and responsibilities for Extension Specialists.

Specialist is a working term used for members of the faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno Extension with subject matter focus and expertise. Specialists provide leadership for developing and implementing comprehensive and balanced approaches to teaching and applied research that address statewide needs. Their work helps to bridge the University and the people of Nevada meeting UNR's land-grant mission. Specialists foster collaboration, develop new connections, and expand existing partnerships. They provide the latest research and/or technologies associated with their field of expertise. Specialists maintain an understanding of issues and concerns faced by stakeholders, communicate these needs to others, and apply expertise and relevant research information to current needs and concerns. Specialists engage in practice and programming that honor diverse perspectives and promote equity and inclusion. Extension programs strive to be inclusive and reach audiences in underserved urban and rural communities. Additionally, Specialists are responsible for ensuring compliance with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights requirements.

Specialists are responsible for identifying emerging issues and societal needs within their area of expertise and work with experts in other disciplines, as needed, to respond to these needs through a systematic, evidence-based educational approach. They incorporate input from and collaborate with Extension Educators, Area Directors, and stakeholders to meet county and statewide needs. Specialists serve as a resource for Extension Educators and provide support for faculty and programming through teaching/training, research, and subject matter expertise. Specialists are valued for their depth of knowledge, familiarity with current developments in their subject area, and links to additional expertise in the University, the state, and across the nation. Specialists are encouraged to work with colleagues in other states to develop multi-state projects and/or programs to solve problems that affect more than one state. Given their expertise and statewide leadership their active membership in Program Teams and Working Groups is needed to develop effective Extension research and educational programming.



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Teaching

Specialists provide leadership throughout the state in their subject matter expertise. Specialists partner with Extension Educators, other faculty, and community partners to develop, deliver, and evaluate statewide research-based educational programs and activities that meet identified needs in the state. As appropriate, Specialists collaborate with experts from other disciplines to address needs requiring interdisciplinary approaches. An Extension program is generally defined as a group or series of presentations, workshops, functions, demonstrations, or other events and activities that form a comprehensive outreach education curriculum, methodology or process that facilitates learning in participant audiences over time through the adoption and application of new knowledge and skills.

Specialists' primary teaching responsibility is to objectively identify needs in a systematic manner based on current data; respond to them through the development or adaptation of educational programming, in-service training, and curricula; implement the delivery of these programs, which can include training others to deliver the program; and evaluate the impacts from these efforts.

Research-based programs are created and delivered using inclusive practices and teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of learners. A key skill for specialists is in translating research information into educational/creative programs and/or effectively communicating its implications to the people of the state. Programs often reach regional, national, and international audiences. Educational delivery methods can be diverse, and include webinars, interactive video broadcasts, apps, educational classes, workshops, short courses, seminars, demonstrations, field days, field trips, tours, one-on-one consultations, collaborative group efforts, press releases, news articles, newsletters, videos, blogs, social media, websites, radio, TV, etc. Specialists develop collaborative relationships with Extension Educators, other faculty, government, service and regulatory agencies, and other community partners to enhance learning and impact.

Examples of efforts and activities that are considered part of an Extension Specialist's teaching appointment may include but are not limited to:

- Needs assessment to inform programming
- Program development or adaptation of educational programs
- Development of educational content, such as curricula, training materials, and websites
- Implementation of educational programs
- Program evaluation
- In-service education for professionals



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- Educational classes for community members
- Work with partners and stakeholder groups to develop, implement, and evaluate action, plans or change policies, systems, and environments
- Active participation with Extension Program Teams and Working Groups
- Technical subject matter assistance to Extension professionals or external audiences
- Mentor or advise graduate students on research projects, internships, or practicum that relate to Extension's mission

Research

Specialists lead, participate in, or support the search for new knowledge through research and scholarship. They also may confirm or synthesize existing knowledge. Scholarly creative activities may include the integration of knowledge or technology leading to new interpretations or applications. Extension Specialists establish collaborative relationships with Extension Educators, other faculty, and professionals, when appropriate, to plan and conduct research and disseminate the results. Scholarship, including applied research and community engaged scholarship, must be peer reviewed or peer-edited, and disseminated to the public or academic venues in the Specialist's field of expertise. Research and creative scholarship also include securing extramural funding to support teaching and research efforts, including gifts, contracts, and grants.

Examples of efforts and activities that are considered part of an Extension Specialist's research appointment may include but are not limited to:

- Extramural funding
- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Authorship of a book or book chapters
- Peer-reviewed Extension or other teaching publications (e.g., curricula, fact sheets, policy briefs, special publications)
- Published abstracts in professional meeting proceedings
- Presentations at professional conferences/meetings
- Intellectual property/patents
- Technical reports and bulletins

Service

Specialists are expected to invest time and effort in activities that benefit the University, College, and Extension, and advance the mission of Extension.



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Examples of avenues to provide service may include but are not limited to:

- Extension committees
- Departmental, College, or University committees
- Serve as a mentor to Extension colleagues
- Peer reviewer (e.g., grants, manuscripts, Extension publications)
- Service in and/or leadership in professional organizations
- Participation and leadership in local or state coalitions or community organizations
- Active member of non-profit boards in community or national organizations
- Service related to one's expertise and appointment

Specialists appointments are diverse and based on the type of contract arrangement (A or B contract), the percentage of their Extension appointment, and the specific percentage of time dedicated to research, teaching, and service. The above description of roles and responsibilities may be modified or adjusted depending on the Specialist's appointment. Specialists prepare role statements annually that include the percentage of time dedicated to each of the three core areas, and clearly communicates the contributions the Specialist will make over the next calendar year. It is understood, however, that a faculty member's emphasis on certain roles and responsibilities may vary from year to year as priorities and expectations are determined on an annual basis. If it becomes necessary to change the percentage of time given to teaching, research, or service or there is a significant change in the Specialist's role during the calendar year the role statement should be revised. Changes to role statements can only be made with the written approval of the Department Chair or Area Director and Extension Director.

This document should be reviewed and updated every three years.

Approved by Director of Extension 2/26/21