

Procedures and Guidelines for Postdoctoral Appointments at the University of Notre Dame

For Information Only

In these procedures and guidelines, guidance for administering the appointment of postdoctoral researchers and scholars is provided. These procedures and guidelines are to be used in the implementation of the Policy on Postdoctoral Appointments at the University of Notre Dame. As such, these procedures and guidelines may repeat language used in the Policy in order to assist in the interpretation of the Policy and in the application of the Procedures and Guidelines.

Responsibilities of Postdoctoral Appointees

Postdoctoral Appointees are neither faculty members nor students. Nor are they visiting researchers or support staff. The responsibilities of Postdoctoral Appointees include:

- The conscientious discharge of research and scholarship responsibilities, which may include teaching responsibilities.
- Conformance to standards of responsible conduct in research, including taking all current required training.
- Compliance with good scholarly and research practice.
- Maintenance of a laboratory notebook and/or other comparable records of research activity, which remain the property of the University upon termination.
- Adherence to University standards regarding use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animal testing, human subjects and the like.
- Open and timely discussion with the faculty mentor regarding all facets of the Postdoctoral Appointee's research activities.
- Prompt disclosure to the mentor regarding the possession and desire to distribute materials, reagents, software, copyrightable and potentially patentable discoveries derived from the postdoc's research.
- Collegial conduct towards members of the research laboratory and others.
- Compliance with all applicable University policies and applicable terms of any sponsored agreement which provides support for the postdoc.
- The expectation to publish following the standards of the discipline.

Responsibilities of Mentors

Accepting a Postdoctoral Appointee into a mentor's laboratory or research program carries with it obligations to the appointee. These include:

- Mentoring with emphasis on encouraging independence in research and scholarship. Providing detailed advice and assistance on the development of a specific research project.
- Providing and maintaining a research environment that is conducive to a Postdoctoral Appointee's research and scholarly training.
- Mentoring in all areas of professional development, such as grant writing, development of written and oral communicative skills, manuscript preparation, and teaching skills, where applicable.
- Providing yearly a written evaluation of performance.
- Providing career counseling and assistance in job placement, including timely submission of letters of reference.
- Ensuring that any externally-funded, directly-paid postdoctoral appointees receive the appropriate type of appointment to recognize their status and presence at the University¹.
- Establishing clear expectations regarding the percentage of effort the postdoctoral appointee is to dedicate to project work and the percentage of effort the postdoctoral appointee may dedicate to his or her individual scholarship.

Selection

Given the variety of existing postdoctoral programs, there are no uniform search or selection procedures that hiring units must follow to identify an individual in a Postdoctoral Appointee position. Nonetheless, hiring units must observe University policies on non-discrimination and make good faith efforts to develop broad and inclusive selection pools when undertaking searches. When a hiring unit wants to move a Postdoctoral Appointee to a regular faculty or staff appointment, it should follow the customary recruitment policies and procedures applicable to those appointment types.

Requests for Appointment

Appointments are recommended by the faculty mentor and approved by the appropriate Chair and Dean for the responsible unit. The approved request for appointment form (including period of appointment, salary, principal duties and obligations), appointee's CV, advanced degree transcript, visa information form (if applicable) and Employee Personnel Appointment Form (EPAF) is forwarded to the Office of the Vice President for Research. Before extending an appointment offer, the hiring unit must first identify resources to support the appointment for the entire length of the appointment.

¹ The OVPR will continue to survey externally funded and directly paid (i.e. not through the University) postdoctoral fellows to determine if they have appropriate benefits coverage.

The Vice President for Research or his/her designee responsible for non-faculty research appointments approves the request and prepares a formal letter of appointment. For appointments requiring visas, the Office of the Vice President for Research works with the office of General Counsel to provide the necessary visa application, or where appropriate, submits the visa petition to Immigration. The formal letter of appointment is returned to the originating department to obtain the signature of the mentor on the letter; the department will transmit the signed letter to the appointee.

The letter of appointment specifies the beginning and ending dates of the appointment, salary and benefits, and the appointee's principal duties and obligations. It also states that acceptance of the appointment indicates acceptance of all Notre Dame policies and procedures relating to academic appointments. The appointee indicates acceptance by signing a duplicate original of the letter and returning it to the Office of the Vice President for Research. Letters of reappointment follow the same format and procedure.

Faculty mentors wishing to extend an offer letter prior to issuance of a formal appointment letter by the Office of the Vice President for Research may use an intent to offer letter. A sample of such a letter is available from the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Degree Completion

A postdoctoral appointment requires that the researcher have an advanced degree, Ph.D., Sc.D., M.D., or the equivalent. International researchers must hold an advanced degree that is equivalent to those provided by U.S. institutions. It is the responsibility of the postdoctoral appointee to provide transcripts that certify that he or she has received, or completed all the requirements of, his/her degree, and it is the responsibility of the mentor to make sure that the documentation is satisfactory. That documentation must be included in the appointee's file that is forwarded for action to Office of the Vice President for Research.

If the trainee has completed all requirements toward the advanced degree, but has not received his/her degree, he/she must provide the documents certifying that the thesis has been approved in its final form, including all necessary signatures, and indicate the date that the degree will be conferred.

In no case will a postdoctoral appointment be made unless the trainee's thesis has been formally approved by the degree granting institution. This same rule applies to trainees receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame.

There may be an occasion in which a future postdoctoral appointee is appointed to another position at the University on an interim basis prior to receiving the Ph.D. or equivalent degree. Such an appointment should follow the normal procedures for filling that position.

Term of Appointment

The initial postdoctoral appointment is most frequently for one year. In general, appointment renewals will be for one year, with the maximum total term of appointments for Postdoctoral Appointees being five years.

This maximum term includes cumulative postdoctoral research experience. Extensions may be granted in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. family leave, illness) if approved by the mentor, Chair, Dean and Vice President for Research.

If a Postdoctoral Appointee has spent part of the training period at another institution or in another field, then the total time of training should not exceed 6 years, except in extraordinary circumstances.

Following the five-year training period, a Postdoctoral Appointee must either be moved into a non-training position or terminated. In the case of termination, written notice shall have been given at least 90 days before the end of the five-year training period.

An individual period of appointment may not exceed the period of time for which funding is guaranteed in the appointment letter.

In cases where the Postdoctoral Appointee is a non-US citizen or permanent resident, immigration rules and regulations may supersede these guidelines.

Reappointment

The supervising faculty member is required to complete a written performance evaluation, and review this evaluation with the Postdoctoral Appointee, prior to requesting reappointment. Postdoctoral Appointees shall have no expectation of appointment beyond the end of the current appointment period and are not eligible for tenure or continuing status. Postdoctoral Appointees whose appointment will not be renewed will receive a notice of non-renewal no less than 90 days prior to the end of the current appointment period.

The supervising faculty member may decide not to renew the appointment of any Postdoctoral Appointee. In such case, the Postdoctoral Appointee is entitled neither to a reason for the decision to non-renew the appointment, nor to a hearing either prior to or subsequent to the decision.

Salary/Stipend Levels

Postdoctoral appointees should be provided a stipend level that reflects both their prior postdoctoral experience and what is customary for the field. The Dean or head of each major unit will set the salary scale for postdoctoral appointees in that discipline. This scale will include a minimum expected stipend, and may include a maximum stipend and/or step levels based on years of experience.

Salaries that are significantly above or below the expected range for a discipline should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Chair and Dean, in consultation with the Office of the Vice President for Research as appropriate.

Benefits

Full-time Postdoctoral Appointees who are appointed by the University of Notre Dame and funding flows through the University are eligible for the following benefits.

- Medical Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Vision Insurance
- Basic Life Insurance
- Supplemental Life Insurance
- Travel/Accident Insurance
- Supplemental Retirement Account
- Educational Benefits Employee/Spouse
- Paid Holidays
- Salary Continuation/Sick Leave²
- Vacation³

² Revision for new appointments and renewals effective after January 1, 2011: Full salary for up to one month (or until the end of the contract, whichever is earlier). Two personal days may be taken per calendar year and five days per calendar year may be used for the illness, medical and/or dental appointments of a child, stepchild, spouse and/or parent.

³Clarification to application of benefit: Two weeks per year. Vacation becomes available for use after the completion of 90 days of employment. Appointments are generally for one year. Up to one week of vacation can be carried forward into a subsequent year of appointment. All vacation time is to be used before the end of the appointment. Any unused vacation time will be forfeited at the end of the appointment and no payment for unused vacation time will be made.

- Leave of Absence (FMLA, Personal, Military)
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- Long term care insurance
- Athletic Tickets and Parking (subject to availability)
- Availability of Athletic Facilities
- LifeWorks Employee Assistance Program
- Bookstore, Joyce Center Varsity Shop, and Golf Pro Shop
- Golf Courses
- University Libraries
- Parking
- Automobile Discount Program
- Auto and Homeowners Discount Program
- Social Security Benefits
- Workers Compensation
- Unemployment Compensation

Details regarding each benefit program can be at the Office of Human Resources website <http://hr.nd.edu/benefits/>.

It is the mentor's responsibility to monitor benefits. The mentor should work with the postdoc to ensure that all vacation time is used prior to the end date of his/her appointment. If the postdoc is supported by a research grant, the mentor should make every effort to ensure that the vacation time is used during a period in which the grant that will be charged for the vacation time has benefited from time worked by the postdoc.

Annual Performance Evaluation and Merit Increase

Mentors are required to provide each year, a written evaluation of Postdoctoral Appointee's performance. The Postdoctoral Appointee should provide his/her written input to this evaluation, and the mentor and Postdoctoral Appointee should discuss the evaluation together. A sample evaluation form is available from the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Postdoctoral Appointees do not participate in the annual University merit increase process. Merit increases are to be provided with the contract renewal. Requests for reappointment with no increase or with an increase significantly above the current University merit increase guidelines will require the written approval of the appropriate department Chair and Dean. Requests for increases other than at the contract renewal date require written approval of the department Chair and Dean.

Full-Time/Part-Time Appointments

Ordinarily postdoctoral appointments are for full-time appointment. If a fractional appointment is requested by the appointee, this must be clearly stated, with the understanding that the appointee may perform and be compensated for additional University services or outside employment, up to but not exceeding full time. Moreover, evidence must be provided that such fractional appointment is consistent with the rules of the funding source and with the visa requirements of appointees who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Adherence to minimum and maximum stipend requirements will be assessed based upon a full-time annual rate calculation. Eligibility for benefits may be impacted by a less than full-time appointment.

Outside Employment and Additional Compensation

A postdoctoral appointee who holds a full-time appointment should consult with the mentor, Dean and Office of the Vice President for Research prior to engaging in additional employment activities such as consulting. These activities must comply with all relevant University policies including those on conflict of interest, conflict of commitment, and intellectual property. In addition, such employment should be discussed with the faculty mentor, and must not interfere with the primary research and training obligations, and must comply with the rules of the funding source.

Any request for additional pay for services from the University of Notre Dame, above the postdoctoral stipend, must be consistent with Human Resource Services policies regarding additional compensation and must be approved in advance by the Department Chair, Dean and Office of the Vice President for Research.

Teaching

Postdoctoral appointments in some disciplines include a role in teaching. For those that do not normally include such a role, when allowed by the funding source and with the approval of the faculty mentor, Postdoctoral Appointees may teach. The number, type and level of courses taught by a Postdoctoral Appointee will be determined and approved by the Department Chair and Dean of the appropriate academic unit. In the case of international Postdoctoral Appointees, visa regulations may determine whether teaching is allowed. The Office of General Counsel should be consulted for teaching duties involving international Postdoctoral Appointees.

The position of Teaching Scholar exists at Notre Dame and may be used in the case of Ph.D. graduates who will have only teaching responsibilities.

Research data, records, products and intellectual property

The Postdoctoral Appointee should be aware that all data, software, and research records, and similar materials generated in the course of research at University of Notre Dame remain the property of the University, and their disposition must be carried out in accordance with University policies on Intellectual Property and Data Retention and Access. In keeping with academic convention, the Postdoctoral Appointee may retain copies of research data that he/she was personally responsible for collecting or generating. Future use of such data must appropriately acknowledge the University of Notre Dame, as well as the Postdoctoral Appointee's research collaborators and mentor.

Application for Grants

A Postdoctoral Appointee may serve as the principal investigator (PI) or Co-PI for a grant, upon approval of the faculty mentor, the department chair, the dean's office and the Vice President for Research or his/her designee. Considerations for this approval include the qualifications of the post doc, length of the postdoctoral appointment, and nature and scope of the grant. If an externally funded program requires that a postdoc be listed as a PI or Co-PI no specific approval is required. In approving PI or Co-PI status, it is the responsibility of the Chair and the Dean to ensure that the postdoc is cognizant of all obligations and responsibilities that are entailed by this status. There must be clear evidence that the postdoc has the experience and expertise to function as PI or Co-PI with incumbent responsibilities to direct the proposed research program, direct the budgeted personnel, manage the budget, and ensure that the research is carried in compliance with all applicable University rules and regulations as well as those of the sponsoring agency. Normally, individuals who qualify for PI or Co-PI status would be postdocs who are well advanced in their postdoctoral training.

Professional Development

Postdoctoral appointees may take advantage of grant writing training, teaching workshops, and career development activities provided by the University.

Termination

The appointment of a Postdoctoral Appointee may be terminated through resignation, non-renewal of appointment, loss of funding which supports the appointment, or dismissal for just cause during the appointment period for poor performance, work related misconduct, violation of University policies or other serious reason as determined by the supervising faculty member.

A Postdoctoral Appointee may have his or her appointment ended with 90 days written notice if the funding supporting his or her appointment ends, or if performance is judged to be unsatisfactory. An exception to termination due to loss of funding is if funding is lost in first year of the appointment. In this case it is the responsibility of the employing department or college to identify alternate resources to fund the balance of the first year's appointment.

The mentor should discuss any involuntary terminations in advance with the Chair or Dean of the department/responsible unit.

A Postdoctoral Appointee who resigns his or her appointment is ordinarily expected to complete his or her teaching duties and to provide at least 30 days written notice to the mentor.

Grievance Process

A Postdoctoral Appointee who believes that he or she has been treated unfairly should first discuss the problem with the faculty mentor and/or Chair of the department/responsible unit. Each unit should designate a faculty member, or member of the administration experienced in postdoctoral education, whose duties are to serve as a resource the Postdoctoral Appointee in addressing and resolving grievances. If a solution cannot be reached at the level of either the department/responsible unit or through the efforts of the designated resource person, the Postdoctoral Appointee should present the grievance to the Dean for information, evaluation, and as necessary, adjudication. The determination by the Dean is the final step in the grievance process.

Dismissal during the appointment period

The supervising faculty member shall provide a written recommendation of dismissal to the academic unit head, with a copy to the Postdoctoral Appointee. The recommendation shall provide the reasons or basis for the proposed action.

If a Postdoctoral Appointee disagrees with the reasons for the dismissal, he/she may, within five business days after receipt of the recommendation, submit an appeal to the academic unit head, with a copy to the supervising faculty member.

The academic unit head will meet with the Postdoctoral Appointee and the supervising faculty member. Within ten business days after receipt of the appeal, the unit head will issue a written determination, affirming, reversing or modifying the recommendation of dismissal with the reason for the decision.

Within five business days after receipt of the decision, the Postdoctoral Appointee may submit a request for reconsideration of the determination to the college dean, who will review the case and issue a final decision within ten business days after receipt of the request for reconsideration.

An extension of the timeline for the above process can be granted if approved by both the postdoctoral appointee and the faculty member/academic unit head/ or college dean.

Issues such as sexual harassment, creation of a hostile work environment, or discrimination based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, disability, veteran status, or age, are the subject of separate University policies. These issues are covered by the Office of Institutional Equity. Postdoctoral Appointees should contact the Office of Institutional Equity on specific policies and procedures relating to these issues.

Interim Action

A Postdoctoral Appointee may be suspended with pay pending a dismissal in a case in which the supervising faculty member, unit head, and college dean determine that the continued presence of the individual on the campus constitutes a substantial interference with the orderly functioning of the University or a substantial area, unit, college or department of the University.

Certificate of Completion

Upon certification by the mentor of successful completion of training, the Office of the Vice President for Research will issue a suitable recognition to the Postdoctoral Appointee, and will notify the University Alumni Association for inclusion of the appointee in its records. The certification will include the time period covered by the postdoctoral training program.

Career Counseling

The faculty mentor is the primary resource for postdoctoral appointees seeking temporary research appointments or permanent positions in the academy or industry. The University of Notre Dame's Career Center is also available to assist postdoctoral appointees, and will support postdoctoral appointees in the same manner it supports graduate students.