

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title:	Postdoctoral Fellows
Policy Number:	02.54.11
Issuing Authority:	Office of the President
Responsible Officer:	Provost
Date Created:	November 26, 2007
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Reviewing Office:	Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education

Definitions

A “postdoctoral fellow” is an individual with a Ph.D., M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M., O.D., Pharm.D., D.P.M., Sc.D., D.Eng., D.S.N., or equivalent doctoral degree from an accredited domestic or an approved foreign institution of higher education who is primarily associated with the university to obtain advanced research skills under the supervision of one or more members of the university faculty. The purpose of a postdoctoral fellowship is to provide research training experiences to prepare the individual for permanent employment in an academic or research position; therefore, the fellow holds a temporary position.

Scope of Policy & Rationale:

I. Postdoctoral Fellow Appointments

A. Criteria for Appointment

1. The appointee was awarded a doctoral degree in an appropriate field, normally within the past five years.
2. The appointment is finite in length. Although the terms of postdoctoral appointments may vary in length, typically no more than five years as a postdoctoral fellow at Temple University is permitted.
3. The appointment involves primarily research and scholarship.
4. The appointment is generally viewed as preparatory for an academic and/or research career.
5. The appointee works under the supervision of one or more members of the university’s faculty.
6. The appointee has the freedom and is expected to publish the results of his/her research or scholarship to the extent permitted under any applicable grant; in accordance with federal, state, and local law; and consistent with university guidelines.
7. The appointment is made in accordance with the university’s affirmative action policy.

B. Types of Appointment

Postdoctoral fellows hold one of two types of appointment: a postdoctoral fellow trainee or a postdoctoral fellow research associate.

1. A trainee is compensated, including any fringe benefits, from a training grant or fellowship awarded by an external agency directly to the postdoctoral fellow and is considered to be a student at the university. If the terms of the grant award prohibit compensated work to supplement the stipend, the individual must be appointed as a trainee.
2. A research associate is compensated, including any fringe benefits, from external funds awarded to the faculty mentor or to a unit of the university for the purpose of conducting research, and is considered to be an employee of the university.

C. Term of the Appointment

1. The length of appointment shall recognize the limited nature of a postdoctoral fellow appointment and its role in the career development of the appointee and shall be consistent with the terms of any applicable grant.
2. Although the length of appointments may vary, the total time spent by an individual as a postdoctoral fellow shall not normally exceed five years.
3. New appointments are ordinarily made for one year and are renewed annually. Reappointment of postdoctoral fellows, which is in the university's sole discretion, shall be contingent on the postdoctoral fellow's record of achievement and for the purpose of continued career advancement.
4. Multi-year appointments are permissible, provided that adequate funding is available. Postdoctoral fellows on multi-year appointments must be evaluated annually. Mentors may terminate multi-year appointments if compelling factors require termination. In the event of termination, the postdoctoral fellow must be given three months' notice in writing.
5. A postdoctoral appointment cannot be made unless the faculty mentor(s), department, and the school/college have received a legally binding commitment to provide funding to support the postdoctoral fellow for the proposed term evidenced by a signed contract or award letter from the granting agency.
6. The postdoctoral fellow must provide a transcript and/or diploma certifying that he/she has received his/her degrees. Candidates who have completed all of their requirements for the advanced degrees, but have not yet received their degrees, should provide documentation certifying that all requirements for the degree have been completed.

D. Letter of Appointment

1. A postdoctoral fellow must receive a letter of appointment prior to commencement of the position, signed by faculty mentor(s) and the Dean of the Graduate School or his/her designee.
2. This standard letter must set forth the basic terms of appointment including, but not limited to, the start and end dates of the appointment, the stipend or salary level, all included benefits, and a statement that the postdoctoral fellow's appointment is subject to all university policies and federal regulations. The standard letter of appointment should also include, if applicable, allowances for moving expenses and any professional travel allowance.
3. The postdoctoral fellow must return a countersigned copy of the letter of appointment, which must be placed in a permanent file and stored with the other personnel records in the Human Resources, copies of which may be kept in the department or school/college.
4. A letter of reappointment or notice of termination should be provided to the postdoctoral fellow at least one month prior to the end date of an appointment.
5. Letters of reappointment must follow the standard format delineated for letters of appointment and must also be signed by the postdoctoral fellow to indicate acceptance of the terms and conditions of the appointment. Letters of reappointment once signed by the postdoctoral fellow shall be retained in a permanent file as described above.

E. Stipend/Salary

1. Prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, the Dean of the Graduate School or his/her designee shall set campus-wide minimum stipend/salary levels for postdoctoral fellows.
2. Minimum stipend/salary levels for postdoctoral fellows in grant requests submitted to the National Institutes of Health shall be those minima established by the NIH for postdoctoral fellows.
3. Unless the external funding agency has policies that limit the stipend/salary to an amount less than the university minimum, faculty submitting grants and negotiating contracts that include requests for support of postdoctoral fellows shall request a stipend/salary and benefits at or above the minimum university postdoctoral stipend/salary and at the prevailing university benefit rate for postdoctoral fellows. If the external funding agency limits funding for postdoctoral fellows to an amount below the university minimum and/or less than the university benefit rate, the request must be at the maximum allowable by the funding agency for a fellow with the requisite level of experience.
4. Any stipend below the university minimum must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School or his/her designee.

F. Benefits

To the extent funded by the external agency, the postdoctoral fellow will be provided with:

1. Upon initial appointment, eligibility to elect enrollment in a health insurance plan offered to persons of the same status.
2. Two weeks' paid vacation accrued over the course of the first year of employment, which can be used during the second year of employment. No vacation days can be carried forward for more than one calendar year.
3. Up to ten days' sick time per year that can be carried over from year to year.
4. Eligibility to participate in a tax-deferred defined contribution pension plan with the postdoctoral fellow responsible for 100% of allowable contributions.
5. University ID Card.
6. Email account provided by the university.
7. Access to university library services on the same basis as research staff.
8. Use of university recreational facilities under the same conditions and at the same costs as provided to university employees.
9. Opportunity to obtain parking at the rates for persons of a similar status (i.e., student or employee, as applicable).
10. Opportunity to audit lecture courses without charge, provided prior permission has been obtained from the course instructor and from the postdoctoral fellow's faculty mentor.

II. Obligations of Postdoctoral Fellows

1. Obligation to obtain the faculty mentor's and any other required university reviews and approvals prior to commencement of the fellowship.
2. Obligation to attend a formal orientation program at the beginning of the fellowship term to review the fringe benefits, payroll and human resources services, access to parking, email, and relevant university policies and procedures.
3. Conscientious discharge of research responsibilities.
4. Conformity with ethical standards in research and scholarship.
5. Compliance with good laboratory practice, including the maintenance of adequate research records.
6. Adherence to all applicable university policies and procedures including, but not limited to, those related to the use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animals, and human subjects; the university patent and copyright policies; and the policy on outside employment.

7. Open and timely discussion with the faculty mentor regarding possession or distribution of tangible property such as materials, reagents, and the like.
8. Discussion of laboratory records or scholarly materials, as required by the faculty mentor.
9. Prior authorization from the faculty mentor to disclose scholarly information, findings, or techniques privately, at scholarly meetings, or in publications regarding any scholarly information, findings, or techniques from projects on which the postdoctoral fellow is not the principal investigator.
10. Appropriate professional conduct toward coworkers and members of the research group.
11. Adequate notice of resignation, which shall be at least one month prior to the end of the appointment period.
12. For any research project in which the postdoctoral fellow is not the principal investigator, the fellow must ensure that all research materials and records are left in a satisfactory state to allow continuation of the project when he/she leaves Temple University.

III. Obligations of Temple University

1. The recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral fellows shall be in accordance with university policies barring discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, and sexual preference.
2. The university shall provide a faculty mentor to assist in providing opportunities for the development of the fellow's research or academic career.
3. The Graduate School shall be responsible for coordinating and monitoring postdoctoral fellow policies to ensure their consistent application across Temple University and shall serve as a resource for postdoctoral fellows.
4. The Graduate School shall provide an orientation for postdoctoral fellows. The postdoctoral fellow shall be given a compendium of information, which shall include a copy of this policy and information regarding how to access other university policies including, but not limited to, policies on intellectual property, misconduct in research, sexual harassment, conflict of interest, and financial disclosure.
5. The Graduate School shall provide an opportunity for postdoctoral fellows to evaluate their postdoctoral training experience, ensuring anonymity for the postdoctoral fellows to the extent possible.
6. The faculty mentor shall provide opportunities for the postdoctoral fellow to develop the expertise needed to broaden his/her skills, knowledge, and perspectives and to qualify him/her for academic and research positions. The responsibilities of the faculty mentor include:

- a) Developing a mutually defined research project or body of scholarly work.
 - b) Encouraging the postdoctoral fellow to acquire and enhance his/her knowledge and technical skills as dictated by his/her current and future needs.
 - c) Encouraging the postdoctoral fellow to present and publish his/her results in a timely fashion.
 - d) Encouraging the postdoctoral fellow to apply for research and training support as appropriate.
 - e) Meeting regularly with the postdoctoral fellow to discuss progress in his/her research or scholarly work.
7. Postdoctoral fellows who receive grants or contracts as principal investigators shall be permitted to the extent allowed by the granting agency to transfer the funds supporting their own research to a place of permanent employment outside Temple University, or to be offered continued employment at the university should the grant award on which they are principal investigator extend beyond the term of the appointment as a postdoctoral fellow. This continued full- or part-time employment should support the postdoctoral fellow at the level specified in the external grant.
 8. The university shall provide a letter of completion at the end of the postdoctoral appointment that shall be signed by the faculty mentor(s) and the Dean of the Graduate School.

IV. Miscellaneous

A. Resolution of Disagreements

1. If a disagreement should occur involving the postdoctoral fellow, the fellow should always attempt to resolve issues concerning his/her professional situation by discussing the matter first with his/her faculty mentor. If there is reason for the postdoctoral fellow to believe that this avenue is inappropriate, he/she may seek recourse through the applicable department, division, program, or unit head, or from the appropriate administrator in the office of the dean of the school/college.
2. The Dean of the Graduate School or his/her designee shall have the authority to make final decisions with respect to disagreements that cannot be resolved within the sponsoring unit or school/college.
3. As a member of the university community, postdoctoral fellows may also raise issues with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and/or Human Resources in accordance with university policies and procedures.
4. The fellow has the right to provide a written response to written evaluations of his/her performance and for these responses to be maintained with the evaluations.

B. Outside Employment

In some cases, opportunities may exist for employment outside the scope of the postdoctoral fellow's responsibilities and compensation. All outside employment, including teaching opportunities, are governed by policies promulgated by the agency that provides funding for the postdoctoral fellow and by university policies including, but not limited to, the Adjunct Faculty policy and the policy on outside compensation. Prior written approval of the Dean of the Graduate School or his/her designee is required before a fellow may engage in outside employment in addition to the fellowship.

Notes:

1. History

Previous policy approved by the president on April 12, 2004.

Last amended:

Approved by the president on November 26, 2007.

November 2022: Updated to reflect current Bylaws and job titles.

2. Cross References/Appendix:

None