Administrative Policy

Title: Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees

Source: Postdoctoral Office, Graduate School

Prepared by: Dean of the Graduate School

Approved by: Roderick Nairn
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

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Applies: All campuses

A. Introduction
Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees (also sometimes called postdocs, postdoctoral scholars, or “regular fellows,”) constitute one of the mainstays of the research enterprise at University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus. Because of their high level of education, Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees (hereafter referred to as “Fellow[s] or postdoctoral fellows”) are able to work in a semi-independent manner on one or more research projects under the direction of the principal investigator with whom they are training.

In 2008, a Postdoctoral Office (PDO) was established in the Graduate School. This office works as a direct liaison for postdoctoral issues with the University offices of Human Resources, Grants and Contracts, Financial Compliance, Administration and Finance, International Student and Scholar Services, and the various schools, colleges, departments, programs, centers, and divisions of the University.

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C. Definition of a Research Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee
This definition applies to all Fellows at the University regardless of their source of funding.

- The appointee holds a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D., D.V.M.) in an appropriate field; and
- the appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar; and
- the appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship; and
- the appointment is at will, transitional, and limited in time and scope; (See Section D below; and
- the appointment may be full or part-time, but at least 75% of the effort shall be devoted to research, teaching, and/or scholarship; and
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory to a full-time academic and/or research career, including careers outside of the laboratory; and
- the appointment is not part of a clinical training program within a Graduate Medical Education program at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus; and
- given that the university considers these positions to be traineeships in highly specialized areas of study, and that these traineeships are required in order to realize full employment in the field, these positions will be defined as internships equivalent to the GME Residency program only for purposes of completing requests for student loan deferments.

D. Term Limits for Research Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee Appointments
- A research postdoctoral fellow may have a maximum of six years of postdoctoral experience at the University. Time spent as a postdoctoral fellow at other institutions is not included in the six-year term limit.
- Individuals who are retained at the University beyond this six-year term limit must be placed into a regular job classification, such as Instructor, Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, or Assistant Professor.
- A research postdoctoral fellow and his/her faculty mentor may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an extension to these terms.

E. Structure for Centralized Monitoring of Policies and Practices
- The Graduate School Dean will have responsibility for establishing all policies for postdoctoral fellows.
- The Postdoctoral Office will develop and manage all aspects of the Postdoctoral program at the University, including training other campus personnel in policy, process, and procedure. In collaboration with Human Resources, the Financial Compliance Office, and the Office of Grants and Contracts, it will monitor employment practices as they apply to Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees.
- Employing departments are responsible for complying with any specific additional or more restrictive requirements of funding agencies.

F. Minimum Salary at Initial Appointment
- The initial minimum stipend/salary for research postdoctoral fellows shall be set using the current NIH training grant and NRSA (or other federal agency, where appropriate) pay scales as guidelines. http://grants.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm
- Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School.
- In disciplines not funded by federal agencies, the Dean of the Graduate School will work with the dean of the appropriate school or college to establish appropriate salary guidelines.
G. Grievance Process
- The Graduate School Dean will appoint a postdoctoral-specific committee to handle grievances. This committee will have equal numbers of faculty and Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees as members.
- The committee will recommend courses of action to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- For current grievance procedures and guidelines refer to the Postdoctoral Office website.

H. Uniform Benefits
- All research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees employed 50% or more shall receive the same benefits, regardless of the source of their support. See the Benefits Eligibility Matrix at the PBS website at: https://www.cusys.edu/pbs/index.html
- Benefits include the standard employee offerings and are subject to the same eligibility and usage requirements as other employment classifications. This includes: group medical and dental insurance, life and AD&D insurance, short and long-term disability, workers’ compensation, unemployment compensation, Flexible Spending Accounts, and COBRA upon termination.
- Leave benefits for fellows/trainees employed 50% or more:
  - Vacation and sick leave policy for all postdoctoral fellows, regardless of the source of funds used to support them, shall be 12 working days of vacation and 12 working days of sick leave per fiscal year for a total of 24 working days (or 192 hours) for full-time positions per fiscal year.
  - Accrued (unused) leave shall be carried forward year to year during the term of employment, but with no payout at termination.
  - Maximum accrual is capped at 44 working days (or 352 hours) of combined sick and vacation leave.
  - Accrual and usage shall follow the prevailing University practices used for other employee classifications. Hours shall be accrued each month at the rate of one day (or 8 hours) each for sick leave and vacation leave, and available for use at the beginning of the next month. Prorated leave shall be accrued for partial month hires and for appointment of at least 50% but less than 100%.
  - Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for Family Medical Leave per the standard criteria used for other campus faculty positions.
  - Postdoctoral Fellows are afforded leave in accord with University policy for all employees for holidays, military duty, bereavement, and jury duty.
  - Should University, State, or federally-supported grant policies change, requiring equitable change in the number of leave days/hours afforded those in postdoctoral fellow positions, the changes will be adjusted accordingly and become effective without requiring formal amendment to this written policy.

I. Employment Process and Oversight
- The Postdoctoral Office is responsible for approving employment actions affecting Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees in the HRMS system.
- The Postdoctoral Office will initiate a Dean’s Personnel Action Report for new postdoctoral appointments, for departmental transfers, for salary increases, for terminations for cause, and for any other reason the campus employment policies and processes may dictate.
- Developing, disseminating, and implementing the process and procedures for recruitment, hiring, and employment personnel actions of Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees shall be the responsibility of the Postdoctoral Office. This includes training other campus personnel in their performance and execution.
• Hiring processes should follow closely the campus practices used for other research faculty employment classifications.
• Annual evaluations shall be required and the summary evaluation sheet (which is a public record) with salary increase information will be submitted to the Postdoctoral Office.
• If funds are available, annual salary increases shall be assumed for Fellows with a “Meeting Expectations” or above evaluation rating. Exceptions require departmental justification submitted to the Postdoctoral Office for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.
• At the end of six years of employment as a Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee, the hiring department must terminate that appointment unless there has been a successful exception petition to extend employment, or the department may hire the Fellow into a regular position with full benefits that include retirement.
• Detailed procedures can be found at www.ucdenver.edu/postdoc.

J. Periodic Institutional Review
Institutional review of this policy and the Postdoctoral Office will be conducted initially at 5 (five) years and every 10 (ten) years thereafter by the Dean of the Graduate School.