



# University of Colorado Denver

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**Title:** Policy for Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees at University of Colorado Denver

**Source:** Postdoctoral Office, Graduate School

**Prepared by:** Dean of the Graduate School

**Approved by:** Roderick Nairn, Provost and Vice Chancellor

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2009

**Replaces:** Draft policy implemented January 1, 2008

**References:** **University of Colorado Denver Policies**

[Background Investigations](#)

[Hiring Process for Full-time Faculty](#)

[Direct Charges to Federally Sponsored Projects](#)

Specifically: **Exhibit D - Faculty and Other Salary Expenses**

<https://www.cusys.edu/policies/Personnel/militaryleave.html>

<http://administration.ucdenver.edu/admin/policies/hr/FML-FacEx.pdf>

<http://administration.ucdenver.edu/admin/hr/training.htm>

**Applies:** University of Colorado Denver

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## A. Introduction

- 1) Research Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee (also known as postdocs, postdoctoral scholars, or “regular fellows,” depending on the source of their support) constitute one of the mainstays of the research enterprise at University of Colorado Denver (UC Denver). Because of their high level of education, 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.
- 2) Beginning in January 1, 2008, the recommendations of a campus task force were implemented to address postdoctoral employment practices at the University of Colorado Denver.
- 3) To implement and coordinate these policies, a Postdoctoral Office (PDO) has been established, beginning operations in July of 2008. 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 UC Denver.

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## **C. Definition of a Research Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee**

This definition will apply to all Fellows at UC Denver 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, i.e., Fellows are not to remain in this class indefinitely and, if they remain employed beyond the established training or mentorship period, they should be moved into a Research Associate or other appropriate faculty title; and
- the appointment may be full or part-time, but at least three-quarters of the effort is understood to be devoted to research, teaching, and/or scholarship; and
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory for 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 UC Denver.

## **D. Term Limits for Research Postdoctoral Fellow/Trainee Appointments**

- A research postdoctoral fellow may have a maximum of six years of postdoctoral experience at UC Denver. Time spent as a postdoctoral fellow at other institutions is not included in the six-year term limit.
- Individuals who are to be retained at UC Denver past this six-year term limit must be placed into a regular job classification such as Instructor, Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, or Assistant Professor.
- Exceptions to this policy may be granted, on a case by case basis, if the research postdoctoral fellow and the faculty mentor successfully petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an extension.

## **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 UC Denver, 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 the 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 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 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
  - 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 less than 100% appointments.
  - 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 approval 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 Chancellor'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 “public record” rating sheet with salary increase information will be submitted to the Postdoctoral Office.
- 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, or may hire the Fellow into a regular position with full benefits that include retirement.
- Detailed procedures can be found in Exhibits A: “Process for Departments Hiring Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees” and B: “Personnel Actions for Departments Employing Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees”.

#### **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.