



**Campus Administrative Policy**

**Policy Title: Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees**

Policy Number: 1009A      Functional Area: Academic and Faculty Affairs

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Effective: May 9, 2024

Approved by: Roderick Nairn, PhD  
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, CU Anschutz

Applies to: CU Anschutz

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**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 the CU 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.

**B. 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 PhD or other terminal doctorate degree (e.g., ScD, MD, DVM) in an appropriate field; excluding GME resident/fellows 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 their research or scholarship; and,
- The appointee is expected to be actively engaged in their career development and to seek out opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to transition to their chosen career; and,

The appointment is at-will, transitional, and limited in time and scope; (See Section C below); and,

- The appointment is usually made at a 1.0 FTE and postdoctoral fellows supported by a training grant must be appointed at a 1.0 FTE; and,
- Postdoctoral Fellows who wish to be appointed at less than a 1.0 FTE, for example, so that they may simultaneously explore other career opportunities, should seek approval from their supervisor for an appointment at less than 1.0 FTE. Postdoctoral Fellows who are approved for a less than a 1.0 FTE appointment are still required to sign and submit a conflict of interest form and are also bound by other policies of the

- University (such as the institutional intellectual property agreement); and,
- The appointment is viewed as preparatory to a full-time research-intensive or research-related career, including careers inside or outside of academia; and,
- The appointment is not part of a training program within a Graduate Medical Education (GME) program at the CU 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.

**C. TERM LIMITS FOR RESEARCH POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW/TRAINEE APPOINTMENTS**

- A Research Postdoctoral Fellow should have a maximum of five years of postdoctoral experience at the University. Time spent as a Postdoctoral Fellow at other institutions is not included in the five-year term limit.
- Individuals who are retained at the University beyond this five-year term limit should be placed into a regular job classification, such as Instructor, Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, or Assistant Professor after a search is conducted
- A Research Postdoctoral Fellow and their faculty mentor may petition the dean of the school/college in which the faculty member has their primary appointment for an extension to these terms.

**D. MINIMUM SALARY AT INITIAL APPOINTMENT**

- The suggested initial minimum stipend/salary for postdoctoral fellows is defined in the current [NIH NRSA training grant guidelines](#). All full-time postdoctoral fellows must receive a stipend either equal to, or above, the NIH guidelines for a postdoctoral fellow with no previous experience.
- Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the dean of the school/college in which the faculty member has their primary appointment.
- This policy covers the salary requirements for all new hires as of July 2015. It is not the intent of the policy to enable decreases in the salary of individuals currently appointed as a postdoctoral fellow.
- In disciplines not funded by federal agencies, the dean of the appropriate school or college will establish appropriate salary guidelines.

**E. GRIEVANCE AND EVALUATION PROCESSES**

- Each school/college should establish their own procedures for handling grievances involving professionalism issues, salary, benefits, and work conditions. Clear directions for how to appeal decisions will be developed by the school/college. The final decision rests with the dean of the school/college in which the fellow is employed.
- Each Postdoctoral Fellow must receive an annual evaluation. This process can be completed according to the procedures adopted by the school/college into which the Postdoctoral Fellow is hired. In addition, for schools and colleges that would prefer

that the Postdoctoral Office in the Graduate School facilitate the evaluation of Postdoctoral Fellows, the Graduate School will provide an online application so that faculty can complete an annual evaluation of each of their Postdoctoral Fellows. Upon request, the Postdoctoral Office in the Graduate School will also provide the department chairperson, or other direct supervisor of faculty who have Postdoctoral Fellows in their lab, notification that this report was completed by the faculty and seen by the fellow.

## F. UNIFORM BENEFITS

- The CU Anschutz Medical Campus uses job code 1438 for all postdoctoral fellows. Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees, who are paid through the University regardless of the source of the funds that support their salary, are considered to be employees of the University. As such, all Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees employed 50% or more will receive benefits as outlined below (and detailed in the Benefits Eligibility Matrix on the Employment Services website). All are subject to standard employee withholdings, including FICA (in accordance with their citizenship, residency, or visa status).
- 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 include:
  - 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.
  - Vacation and sick time can be carried over from year to year during the tenure of an appointment as a postdoctoral fellow/trainee, but upon termination of the Postdoc appointment, leave is not paid out and unused leave at termination date will be forfeited. Remaining leave balances cannot be transferred to other regular job classification positions within the University of Colorado system.
  - Maximum accrual is capped at 44 working days (or 352 hours) of combined sick and vacation leave.
  - Accrual and usage 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 (FMLA)
  - Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for six (6) weeks of paid Parental Leave. The leave benefits in this policy supersede all other campus leave policies as they relate to postdoctoral fellows.
    - To be eligible for paid Parental Leave, the individual must have a regular appointment of 50% or greater on the date of birth, adoption, foster care placement, or guardianship of a *child*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See APS 5062 for definition of *child*.

- Meet the definition of Parent as set forth in APS 5062.
- Postdoctoral Fellows whose grant funding may allow for over six weeks of Parental Leave may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, however, this does not guarantee more than six weeks of benefits.
- Parental leave must be taken and completed within one year of the birth, adoption, foster care placement, or guardianship of a child.
- Paid parental leave will supplement FAMILI and PFML wages, not to exceed 100% of pay, and cannot be utilized without FAMILI unless FAMILI has been exhausted in the current year or the postdoctoral fellow is otherwise ineligible for FAMILI.
- 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.

## G. PERIODIC REVIEW

- The Offices of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs , the campus Postdoc office and Human Resources will review this policy, and how it is being administered, on an ad hoc, as needed, basis, but no less frequently than every five to seven years in accordance with Campus Administrative Policy 3000, Establishing Campus Administrative Policies.

## Notes

1. History
  - January 1, 2009: Adopted by the Provost
  - January 1, 2013: Amended
  - July 13, 2015: Revised
  - June 1, 2019: Revised. Minor clarifications to clarify career expectations, bring the policy more in alignment with NIH standards and clarify funding and benefits.
  - November 11, 2019: Technical clarifications: leave balances do not transfer to other positions at the University, all postdocs in job code 1438 are subject to FICA.
  - June 23, 2020: Clarified leave balance transfer rules
  - February 1, 2023: Revised to apply to the Anschutz Medical Campus only.
  - May 9, 2024: Revised
2. CU System [Administrative Policy Statement 5062: Leave](#)
3. Responsible Offices:
  - Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
  - Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources
  - Associate Vice Chancellor for Financial Services/Controller

Responsible Officer: Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs