



UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

GRADUATE COLLEGE

OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW HANDBOOK

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW HANDBOOK

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Postdoctoral Fellow) position is a limited time trainee position for a qualified individual who has obtained a PhD or appropriate professional degree. This is a temporary appointment carrying no academic rank.

The Postdoctoral affairs office under the direction of the Associate Dean of the Graduate College oversees and approves all appointments of Postdoctoral Fellows, provides additional training, mentoring and career development activities, serves as an advocate for the Postdoctoral Fellow, and manages any grievances.

The primary effort of the Postdoctoral Fellow is research; individuals with primary responsibility for patient care and service should be classified as clinical fellows or residents and excluded from this category. Postdoctoral Fellow appointments are limited to 4 years unless an exemption is obtained from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Most Postdoctoral Fellows are considered employees of the University and are eligible for certain core benefits including health and dental insurance, paid time off and holidays. Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible for participation in the University Retirement Program, although time served as a Postdoctoral Fellow will count toward OU retirement.

Note that there are other job titles for people with PhD degrees such as Research Scholar or Research Associate. This Handbook contains information only for persons appointed as Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

II. PROCEDURE FOR ADVERTISING A POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW POSITION

Postdoctoral Fellow positions do not require a position to be opened or a background check to hire. These positions are not posted through HR; notices of positions available can be posted on [the Postdoctoral Fellows page](#) of the Graduate College web site, around campus or in national advertisements. All notices and advertisements must include an equal opportunity statement; e.g., "OU is an equal opportunity institution or Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer".

III. TYPES OF POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW APPOINTMENTS

Upon appointment, a Postdoctoral Fellow is assigned to one of two distinct categories for payroll, taxation, and health insurance purposes:

Postdoctoral Research Fellow:

A Postdoctoral Research Fellow is an individual who is an employee of OUHSC while pursuing further training and who provides services to OUHSC for compensation. These Postdoctoral Research Fellows receive a salary, usually as part of an NIH- other externally funded grant. Salaries and wages are fully taxable to the individual and taxes are withheld as for all OUHSC employees. Non-resident aliens should direct any tax questions to Payroll Services – Foreign National Taxation Specialist at (405) 271-2055 ext. 46351. Postdoctoral Research Fellows receive benefits as shown under the Benefits section.

NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow:

A NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow is an individual who is receiving a true fellowship from NIH or another branch of HHS (such as an F32 or T32 Award), as defined by the IRS, and receives an amount to aid in the pursuit of research training. This amount cannot represent payment for the performance of any past, present, or future teaching, research, or other

services. NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows receive benefits as shown under the Benefits section.

Since NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not employees of OUHSC they receive their compensation as monthly vouchers rather than through the payroll system.

In accordance with IRS regulations, although taxable, OUHSC does not withhold federal or state income taxes on NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows. **Therefore, to the extent that a scholarship/fellowship is federally taxable to the individual, that individual will probably have to file federal quarterly estimated income tax returns and pay quarterly taxes in order to comply with individual income tax regulations.** It is important to consult an income tax professional or the IRS for advice on this matter. The IRS booklet, Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education, can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.irs.gov>.

In the Search box type: Publication 970. The booklet can be printed out or you may call (800) 829-3676 for a copy to be sent by mail. Additional publications at this site that may help you include:

Publication 421, Scholarships and Fellowship Grants

Publication 355, Estimated Tax

Publication 306, Penalty for Underpayment of Estimated Tax

Publication 505, Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax

State of Oklahoma income tax website - <http://www.ok.gov/tax/>.

Part-time Postdoctoral Research Fellow:

A Postdoctoral Research Fellow position is a full-time position of one to four years, training scientists/researchers for career advancement. Only in rare cases should a postdoctoral position be part-time and only for short periods of time. A Postdoctoral Fellow may request his/her position be changed to part-time or enter a position as part-time because of a variety of reasons including the birth of a child, care for an ill or injured family member or his/her own physical impairments. A position cannot be part-time due to lack of funds to meet the NIH minimum salary/stipend standards. Part-time Postdoctoral Research Fellows receive benefits as shown under the Benefits section.

Documentation from both the faculty mentor and the Postdoctoral Fellow requesting a part-time position should include the reason for the request, number of hours, projected length of time, and salary. This information must be received and approved by the Dean of the Graduate College before the letter of offer or change in status will be issued.

IV. SALARY

The salary of Postdoctoral Fellows appointed at OUHSC should follow the National Institutes of Health guidelines for National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipend levels and should not be lower than the NRSA stipend for postdocs with 0 years of experience. The NIH guidelines are posted on the NIH website under Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Stipend and Other Budgetary Levels Effective for Fiscal Year (see appropriate fiscal year and search for any revisions that may be announced). Any requests for starting salaries lower than the minimum NIH level for NRSA stipends must be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the Graduate College. Salary increases in subsequent years of employment at OUHSC are budgeted for NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows. For Postdoctoral Fellows not appointed to NRSA's,

annual increases are not automatic but instead are based on merit and availability of funds. The General Ledger Account Code used for correct fringe rate is 511361.

Effective April 3, 2017, the starting salary for all newly hired Postdoctoral Fellows must be at or above the current NRSA minimum stipend level (year 0) without exception. If a faculty member cannot afford to pay at least the NRSA minimum (year 0) salary, then the individual cannot be appointed as a Postdoctoral Fellow. The current NRSA minimum stipend level for Postdoctoral Fellows is \$47,484 as listed on the NIH announcement [NOT-OD-16-134](#); current NRSA stipend levels should be confirmed from the NIH website at the time of appointment. Note that Postdoctoral Fellows hired at the NRSA minimum salary level (currently \$47,484) should be classified as exempt OUHSC employees who are ineligible for overtime pay, since the salary is higher than the minimum FLSA level for hourly employees (currently projected to be \$47,476 effective December 1, 2016).

Exceptions to NRSA-Minimum Salary for Postdoctoral Fellows:

As stated above, any requests for starting salaries lower than the minimum NIH level for NRSA stipends must be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the Graduate College prior to April 3, 2017. After April 3, 2017, there will be no exceptions and salaries for all new Postdoctoral Fellows must be at or above the NRSA minimum.

Effective November 27, 2016, any Postdoctoral Fellow with salary less than \$47,476 will be classified as non-exempt (hourly) employees at OUHSC and will be eligible for overtime pay as detailed below, in accordance with new Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) federal regulations that are expected to take effect December 1, 2016. (Note that Postdoctoral Fellows with salaries at or above \$47,476 will remain classified as exempt employees at OUHSC and are not eligible for overtime.)

OUHSC policy is to advise that salaries for all Postdoctoral Fellow appointed prior to April 3, 2017, be at or above the NRSA minimum (year 0) level; however if all parties are in agreement to continue with a salary below this threshold, then a Post-Doctoral Fellow FLSA Acknowledgement Form must be signed by the Postdoctoral Fellow, the Lab Head / PI, and the Department Chair to acknowledge that all parties are aware of and understand the rules and regulations of the FLSA and agree to abide by them. The signed form must be submitted to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs within the Graduate College at OUHSC. Postdoctoral Fellows with non-exempt (hourly) status are required to record and report their work hours each week, honestly and accurately, using paper time sheets that must be reviewed by the Laboratory Head / PI and processed into the TAL (Time, Attendance and Leave) system by the department / program. More information about TAL and a link to the paper time sheet templates can be found on the TAL website: <http://tal.ouhsc.edu/Resources.aspx>. Overtime must be compensated for hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a workweek at a rate not less than one and one-half their regular rates of pay or one and one-half compensatory time off (if allowed by department). Hours worked includes any time spent in the work place, when not on break, as well as any time spent outside of the workplace reviewing emails, taking phone calls, or otherwise engaging in work for the University.

Willful deviations and non-compliance by any party may result in discipline, up to and including termination from OUHSC, as well as action by the Department of Labor.

V. PROCEDURE FOR APPOINTING A POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW

Postdoctoral Research Fellows

The following applies to Postdoctoral Research Fellows who are University employees and being paid from University or faculty mentor's funds.

1. The department appointing the Postdoctoral Research Fellow forwards a copy of the signed Postdoctoral Application Form (downloaded from the Future Postdocs page of the Graduate College web site) to the Graduate College Senior Administrative Manager along with the proposed starting pay and estimated start date.
2. The Graduate College will review the appointment paperwork. If the appointment is approved the department will be notified and can proceed with the hiring process. If the appointment is not approved the department will be notified and the rationale for not approving the appointment will be provided.
3. Application and salary information is kept on file in the Graduate College until the Postdoctoral Fellow's employment is terminated.
4. If the Postdoctoral Fellow is to be paid from a grant or contract, the appointment letter to the Postdoctoral Research Fellow from the appointing faculty member must reflect that as a condition of employment the appointment is contingent upon continued funding of the project. The following statement is an example of the language that should be used in the letter. "Funding for your salary is from an externally funded grant/contract to the University and is contingent upon continued funding of this project. Should the grant funding be reduced or end, you may be given a minimum 60-day notice of termination.

NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded to the NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow and administered by OUHSC. NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not OUHSC employees.

1. Once the award is received by OUHSC, an electronic personnel action form (ePAF) for the Fellow will be entered for the start date of the fellowship by the department. This ePAF is to establish the Fellow as a volunteer within the HR system. The Fellow should be set up with Job Code 5426 and Employer Group – Volunteer. This will stop the stipend payment through Payroll.
2. The stipend for the award is made through Accounts Payable by Voucher. The amount of the stipend (listed on the Notice of Grant Award - NGA) is divided by 12, and the Fellow is paid that amount each month through a voucher. A copy of the Notice of Grant Award page must be attached to the voucher for back up. The General Ledger Account Code for this payment is 551000.

VI. LENGTH OF APPOINTMENT OF A POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW

A postdoctoral position is a short-term, training position that should lead to a career in academics, private industry, or government. Appointments should be for a maximum of four years. A four year time period for postdoctoral training has become the recommended length for most universities. A time-limited appointment protects the Postdoctoral Fellow from an indefinite length of stay in a training position and is an adequate period for transition into full time positions with appropriate salaries and benefits.

In some cases, a faculty member may wish to extend an individual's postdoctoral appointment beyond the fourth year. If so, a written request to the Dean of the Graduate College should be made before the end of the Postdoctoral Fellow's fourth year. Requests for a fifth year must include a mutually agreed upon and detailed career development plan for the Postdoctoral Fellow

signed by both the faculty mentor and the Postdoctoral Fellow. In all cases, appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow at OUHSC is limited to a period not to exceed five years.

VII. BENEFITS

Health Insurance

Postdoctoral Research Fellows

Postdoctoral Research Fellows who are University employees and being paid on University or faculty mentor's funds receive health, dental, and vision insurance as an employee of OUHSC. The individual may elect to pay for coverage of qualified family members.

NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded to the NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow and administered by OUHSC; therefore, NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not OUHSC employees.

All NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows must have health insurance to train at OUHSC. They have the option of providing evidence of outside coverage or obtaining health insurance through the OUHSC employee insurance carrier. Dental and/or vision coverage are available for an additional fee. The Institutional Allowance portion of the NIH Fellowship provided to the NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow can be used to pay the employee costs for medical, dental, and vision insurance.

The following procedure is followed to charge the health, dental, or vision insurance through the OUHSC group insurance plan to the Institutional Allowance.

The Institutional Allowance provided by the NIH Fellowship (or Trainee-related expenses paid for Training Grants) is charged the OU share of the insurance cost. If this cost is higher than the equivalent amount of fringe that would be paid to an OUHSC employee, the Institutional Allowance will be charged the equivalent amount to the fringe that would be paid if the Fellow were an employee of OUHSC (for fiscal year 2016-17 the amount is 20% of the salary).

If the OU share of the cost for insurance exceeds the amount above, the Graduate College will pay any difference between the OU share and the amount charged to the NIH Institutional Allowance.

For example, using figures for 2015:

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow with 0 years experience

Salary: \$42,840/year

Fringe rate 19.1%: \$681.87/month = \$8,182.44/year

Institutional Allowance: \$7,850/year

Fellow chose Blue Options PPO (default plan) Employee only and Delta Basic Dental

OU Share: \$438.32/month + \$20.32/month = \$458.64/month = \$5,503.68/year

Since OU share is less than fringe rate, Institutional Allowance would be charged OU share amount

Cost to Institutional Allowance: \$458.64/month = \$5503.68/year

Out of pocket cost to NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow: \$34.98/month = \$419.76/year

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow with 0 years experience

Salary: \$42,840/year

Fringe rate 19.1%: \$681.87/month = \$8,182.44/year

Institutional Allowance: \$7,850/year

Fellow chose Blue Options PPO (default plan) Employee and Family and Delta Basic Dental (self only)

OU Share: \$778.64/month + \$20.32/month = \$798.96/month = \$9587.52/year

19.1% fringe rate: \$681.87/month = \$8,182.44/year

Since OU share is more than fringe rate, Institutional Allowance would be charged fringe rate and Graduate College would pay the difference between OU share and fringe rate

Cost to Institutional Allowance: \$681.87/month = \$8,182.44/year

Cost to Graduate College: \$159.51/month = \$1914.12/year

Out of pocket cost to NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow: \$617.50/month=\$7410.00/year

Once a Postdoctoral Fellow has completed the necessary benefit election forms, the OUHSC Benefits Office will notify the Fellow's department and the Graduate College of the total OU share of the Fellow's coverage.

Each month, the Benefits Office will invoice the Fellow for the employee share of coverage and the Fellow's department for the OU share of coverage.

- The Fellow is responsible for paying their portion directly to HR.
- The department is responsible for submitting a cost transfer to pay its portion of the OU share (up to fringe rate) using the funds from the fellowship's NIH Institutional Allowance.
- When the OU share exceeds the associated fringe amount that would be paid on the Fellow's salary, the department will forward the Graduate College a copy of the invoice indicating the amount that was paid by the NIH Institutional Allowance (or Trainee-related expenses). The Graduate College will then submit a cost transfer to cover the balance, if any.

If the Fellow's salary increases, the department must notify the Benefits Office so that any applicable tier changes can be made to the OU share and employee share on the next month's billing.

Leave

The OUHSC Leave policy is the same for Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

- OUHSC administers separate vacation and sick leave accounts for Postdoctoral Fellows. On July 1st of each year, Postdoctoral Fellows will receive 15 days (120 hours) vacation and 15 days (120 hours) sick leave annually. Leave balances as of June 30th will be cleared and the New Year's leave earnings will be posted to the Fellow's leave account effective July 1. No leave carryover to the next fiscal year is permitted.
- Postdocs hired between the 1st and 15th of the month will receive the full month's leave accrual; those hired after the 15th will not receive vacation or sick leave for the month in which they are hired.
- Payout of leave on termination or conversion to benefits eligible faculty or staff appointment is not permitted. If a Postdoctoral Fellow receives a benefits eligible faculty or staff

appointment, vacation and sick balances are reduced to zero and accruals begin using the standard PTO (Paid Time Off) schedule.

Holiday Pay

The OUHSC Holiday Pay policy is the same for Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for paid University holidays.

Professional Leave

The OUHSC Professional Leave policy is the same for Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

Professional Leave for Postdoctoral Fellows may be granted to attend scientific meetings or scientific training only. Approval is at the discretion of the faculty mentor and the department. There is no accrual of Professional Leave.

Voluntary Retirement Plans

OUHSC Postdoctoral Fellows have the option to participate in the University's Voluntary Retirement Plans 403(b) and 457 with personal funds.

Absence from Work Due to the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Family & Medical Leave Act is the same for Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

Postdoctoral Fellows who have worked for the University for at least twelve (12) months and have worked a minimum of 1250 hours in the prior twelve (12) months are eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Postdoctoral Fellows who qualify for FMLA Leave are eligible for up to twelve (12) weeks of leave within a twelve (12) month period for the following:

- Serious health condition that renders the Fellow unable to perform duties of their position.
- Care for spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition.
- Adoption of a child or care of a foster child (within one year after placement); or
- Birth of a child and care of a newborn (within one year of the birth).

Postdoctoral Fellows must inform their faculty mentor and Departmental Administrator at least 30 days prior to the expected dates of his/her absence whenever possible. FMLA requires only unpaid leave. However, Fellows may apply any accrued leave, sick and vacation, to cover the FMLA absence. Fellows on paid Workers Compensation will receive pay as provided under current University policy. All paid time off runs concurrently with FMLA except compensatory time.

The Postdoctoral Fellow must obtain a medical release from the health care provider, and possibly a Fitness For Duty certificate before returning to the workplace. The Fellow returning from FMLA job-protected leave will be restored to the same benefits eligibility, seniority, and position.

Extended Leave

The OUHSC Extended Leave policy is the same for Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

If a Postdoctoral Fellow requests additional leave past the twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement, the leave is considered a personal leave of absence, no longer part of the FMLA entitlement. A personal leave of absence must be requested of the supervisor directly, it must be approved for a designated duration, and is granted contingent upon the operation needs of the laboratory.

Extended leave shall not exceed three (3) months in duration. Total extended leave time taken cannot exceed six months.

Part-time Benefit-eligible Postdoctoral Research Fellows

- Faculty members can only hire a Postdoctoral Fellow at less than 1.0 FTE in exceptional circumstances, and they must obtain prior approval from the Dean of the Graduate College.
- Postdoctoral Fellows who hold an FTE of 0.75 or less will receive partial payment credits for core benefits. The employee will pay the difference between the total cost of the employee's benefits and the amount contributed by the University. Part-time Postdoctoral Fellows will receive a percentage of University-paid benefits in accordance with the following benefits payment table:

FTE (Full Time Equivalent)	Percentage of University paid benefits the employee will receive
0.5 - 0.59	50%
0.6 – 0.75	75%
0.76 – 0.99	100%

- A Postdoctoral Fellow appointment for less than 0.5 FTE is not eligible for benefits.

VIII. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Postdoctoral Fellows are recognized as crucial for maintaining the research enterprise of the institution but it is important for both the postdocs and their mentors to remember that all Postdoctoral Research Fellows and NRSA Fellows are trainees who need to spend some time planning their future career. We encourage postdocs to attend Postdoc Association events to discuss any matters of concern to postdocs, especially career options. The Postdoctoral Affairs office of the Graduate College exists to advocate for postdocs, listen to concerns, and help with career planning. There are several resources for postdocs:

- Seminars and workshops are organized for postdocs and/or students to learn more about different career paths
- The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has published a [Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Advisors](#) that lays out responsibilities on both sides see
- The OUHSC Graduate College is a sustaining member of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), so all postdocs on campus can sign up for free affiliate membership to the organization. The [NPA web site](#) has a lot of useful information, including description of six [Core Competencies](#) that all postdocs should aim to achieve by the end of their training .
- The Graduate College requires all postdoctoral fellows to complete an Individual Development Plan, in consultation with their mentors. This should be done during your first year and updated each year. The instructions are at [MyIDP](#).
- The NIH requires NRSA trainees to receive instruction in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) every 4 years during their graduate and postdoctoral training. The Graduate College strongly advises ALL postdoctoral fellows to take the advanced workshop series [Integrity in Scientific Research II](#).

IX. ENROLLMENT IN OUHSC COURSEWORK

Tuition Waiver

Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible to receive the staff tuition waiver as they are not full benefit eligible employees. Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible to receive a non-resident tuition waiver; however, the Fellow is responsible for payment of the in-state resident tuition.

Procedure For Enrolling in Courses as a Non-Degree Seeking Student

Postdoctoral Fellows may enroll as Special Students (non-degree seeking student) for courses that provide professional development. Postdoctoral Fellows can enroll as Special Students in a maximum of 12 credit hours during their appointment term as a Postdoctoral Fellow. Postdoctoral Fellows should follow the following procedure to enroll as a Special Student:

1. Go to <http://admissions.ouhsc.edu/> to apply as a Graduate Special Student.
2. First time applicants must submit \$75 application fee online.
Fill out the Special Student application form that is on the online application and email it to admissions@ouhsc.edu.
3. The instructor of record must sign the Special Student application form, indicating approval of the Postdoctoral Fellow's enrollment in the selected course. An email from the instructor approving enrollment may be sent to admissions@ouhsc.edu in lieu of instructor signature.
4. The Postdoctoral Fellow's faculty mentor must approve the course enrollment(s).
5. The completed form must be submitted to the Graduate College for approval. The Graduate College will make the final approval once the completed application is received.
6. The Office of Admissions & Records will designate the Postdoctoral Fellow as an Oklahoma resident, if appropriate, or in the case of an international Postdoctoral Fellow, notify the Bursar to waive the non-resident tuition.

X. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Performance evaluations are required for all postdoctoral fellows. Evaluations are useful to (1) achieve desired work performance; (2) receive ideas and input; (3) assist fellows in personal development; (4) correct performance problems; (5) assist fellows to develop additional knowledge, skills, and abilities for job advancement; (6) document shortcomings for positive discipline procedures that may be necessary; and (7) provide compensation relative to work performance. New Postdoctoral Fellows are to receive an evaluation within their first three months of employment and all postdoctoral fellows are to receive a performance evaluation from their mentor at least annually. Evaluations may be given on a more frequent schedule when supervisors believe them to be useful. Performance evaluations are to be documented and discussed with the employee receiving it. The evaluation is signed by both the mentor (supervisor) and the postdoctoral fellow, and the budget unit head as appropriate. The employee's signature is not interpreted to mean agreement with the evaluation but rather acknowledgment that the evaluation has been discussed with the postdoctoral fellow who is to be given a copy of the written evaluation.

The University's Performance Summary Report is to be completed and signed by the postdoctoral fellow's immediate supervisor, the postdoctoral fellow, and the appropriate budget unit head. The postdoctoral fellow should have two working days after receiving a copy of this summary before he or she is required to sign it. One copy of the summary is to be given to the fellow evaluated, and the original is kept in the postdoctoral fellow's official personnel file. The form is available on the [Human Resources](#) website.

If performance is judged to be unsatisfactory, a detailed account of the deficiencies and plans for remediation, including a timeframe, must be attached to the Summary report.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Postdoctoral Fellows do not get paid for accrued leave upon resignation from or termination of employment at OUHSC.

Satisfactory Conditions

Postdoctoral Fellows terminated under satisfactory conditions can generally expect to receive a minimum 60-day written notice in advance of their termination. The University expects a 30 day period of notice in writing from Postdoctoral Fellows resigning from University employment.

Reduction in Force

Postdoctoral Fellows terminated due to loss of funding by faculty mentor shall receive a minimum 60-day written notice in advance of their termination.

Termination Due to Unsatisfactory Performance

As for all University employees, Postdoctoral Fellows may be discharged immediately if the University of Oklahoma [Standards of Conduct](#) are flagrantly violated. Examples include, but are not limited to: scientific misconduct, non-compliance with safety procedures, or non-compliance with regulations governing animal care and use, human subjects, recombinant DNA or research using infectious agents.

The following describes the procedure for corrective action for a Postdoctoral Fellow following an unsatisfactory performance evaluation:

1. If a Postdoctoral Fellow fails to make satisfactory progress in their training and research effort the faculty mentor will schedule a performance meeting with the Postdoctoral Fellow and provide a written description of the unsatisfactory performance issues, expectations required for a satisfactory performance and a timeline to meet these expectations. The Postdoctoral Fellow will be given a minimum of 30 days to address these deficiencies. This document, including the date of the meeting and the date by which performance issues must be addressed, must be signed by the faculty mentor and the Postdoctoral Fellow. A copy of the signed document must be provided to the Postdoctoral Fellow and the Dean of the Graduate College.
2. If the performance issues identified by the faculty member are not satisfactorily met by the date determined during the first performance meeting, the faculty mentor will meet with the Postdoctoral Fellow for a second performance meeting. If there is no sign of improvement, this second meeting can be held before the appointed date. The faculty member will provide the Postdoctoral Fellow a written description of the unsatisfactory performance issues, expectations required for a satisfactory performance, a statement that if these are not met the Postdoctoral Fellow will be terminated, and a termination date. The Postdoctoral Fellow will be given a minimum of 30 days to address these deficiencies prior to termination. This document, including the date of the meeting and the date of possible termination (a minimum of 5 working days after the 30 days), must be signed by both the faculty mentor and the Postdoctoral Fellow. A copy of the signed document must be provided to the Postdoctoral Fellow and the Dean of the Graduate College.
3. If the Postdoctoral Fellow does not make satisfactory performance by the stated deadline, the faculty mentor will seek permission from the Dean of the Graduate College to terminate the Postdoctoral Fellow.

4. Once permission to terminate the Postdoctoral Fellow is obtained from the Dean of the Graduate College, the faculty mentor will provide the Postdoctoral Fellow with a termination letter giving them 5 working days notice of termination. The letter will include the procedures for filing a grievance.
5. The Postdoctoral Fellow has 5 working days within receiving the termination letter to file a written grievance with the Dean of the Graduate College. If a grievance is filed, the termination may be stayed until the grievance procedure has been followed and a final decision has been rendered, as determined by the Dean of the Graduate College.
6. A copy of the written notice of termination must be sent to Human Resources Office.

XI. WHEN THINGS DO NOT GO WELL

We hope that every postdoc has a happy and successful time at OUHSC but we recognize that things can go wrong between a postdoc and their mentor, for many reasons (personal incompatibility, different aspirations of postdoc and mentor, misunderstandings, stress on one side or the other). If a postdoc has issues with their mentor/lab, there are steps that can be taken.

1. Talk to other postdocs. Get their opinions on the gravity of your situation compared to their experiences. Make sure you are following your side of the AAMC “Compact between postdoctoral appointees and their mentors”.
2. Discuss issues of concerns with the mentor. This can be a difficult conversation but is essential. The mentor may not be aware that you are experiencing issues.
3. If the issues persist, the next step can be to contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in the Graduate College at OUHSC to request a meeting with the Graduate College Postdoc Advisory Committee (GCPAC). The GCPAC is chaired by a senior officer of the Graduate College and committee members are assembled on a case-by-case basis, taking care to avoid conflicts of interest with committee members. The GCPAC consists of three faculty of diverse ranks and one Postdoctoral Fellow nominated by the OUHSC Postdoctoral Association. Following a meeting with the Postdoctoral Fellow, the GPAC will then meet with the Postdoc’s mentor to discuss issues of concern and agree upon an action plan to resolve the situation.
4. If issues continue to persist, the Postdoc may wish to file a complaint with Human Resources (see Staff Dispute Resolution Request) or the University Equal Opportunity Officer for the Health Sciences Center campus: Bobby J. Mason, University Equal Opportunity Officer Health Sciences Center Campus, 1105 N. Stonewall Avenue, Room 258 Oklahoma City, OK 73117 | Phone (HSC) Office: (405) 271-2110 Email: radawn-williams@ouhsc.edu
5. If the mentor decides termination of the Postdoctoral Fellow is necessary, the Postdoc may follow grievance procedures (outlined in section XII) if desired.

XII. POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Although post-doctoral fellows are University employees, they are at the University primarily to receive additional education. Therefore, even though they are generally appointed for one year at a time, the University, through its designated officials, retains the right to evaluate the academic qualifications, performance, professional conduct, and suitability for promotion, continued education and certification of post-doctoral fellows receiving education at the University. [Note: Clinical trainees enrolled in a College of Medicine graduate medical education

program (i.e. resident or fellow) are subject to the Grievance Policy in the Resident Handbook, in accordance with the Resident Agreement, for grievances related to their program.]

Because of the post-doctoral fellows' positions as employees who are also receiving education, any grievance brought by a fellow other than those clinical trainees in the College of Medicine, regarding his or her rights as a fellow or any allegation of wrongful administrative action resulting in probation, suspension, or dismissal and termination of post-doctoral education shall be brought under this policy. All grievances must be started within thirty days of the time the fellow knew or should have known of the decision or situation that is the subject of the grievance. In the event a post-doctoral fellow has a grievance, the following steps shall be followed:

- 1) The post-doctoral fellow shall discuss the grievance with the supervisor or program director and attempt to resolve the issue within the program.
- 2) If the post-doctoral fellow is not satisfied with the program's decision on the issue, he or she may request a meeting with the Assistant or Associate Dean in charge of post-doctoral fellows in the College in which the fellow is assigned¹ through submission of a written grievance within ten days of beginning the attempt to resolve the issue with the supervisor or program director.
- 3) The Assistant/Associate Dean shall investigate the written grievance.
- 4) The Assistant/Associate Dean shall attempt to arbitrate the grievance. If the matter cannot be resolved, the post-doctoral fellow may within seven days of receipt of the notification that the Assistant/Associate Dean was unable to resolve the issue request a hearing before the Post-Doctoral Fellow Appeals Committee. This request shall be written and submitted to the Dean of the College in which the fellow is assigned.
- 5) The Dean shall convene an ad hoc Post-Doctoral Fellow Appeals Committee to consider the fellow's grievance.
- 6) The Post-Doctoral Fellow Appeals Committee shall consist of six members: three selected from the faculty and three selected from among the post-doctoral fellows in the College where the post-doctoral fellow is assigned. The Dean of the College shall appoint the membership. The Assistant/Associate Dean shall serve ex officio.

Charge: The Committee may hear an appeal by a post-doctoral fellow who, (1) thinks he or she has been unfairly evaluated by a program or that his or her rights as a fellow have been abrogated, and (2) has been unable to resolve the matter in conference with the program director and the Assistant/Associate Dean. While the responsibility for evaluations rests with the program, the primary responsibility of the Committee is to mediate disputes which have not been satisfactorily resolved at the program level in order to protect both post-doctoral fellows and faculty from arbitrary and capricious decisions.

¹ At OUHSC, the assigned College is the Graduate College

7) The Post-Doctoral Fellows Appeals Committee shall hear the grievance. The Committee shall determine the procedure and conduct of the hearing incorporating the basic principles of due process. The post-doctoral fellow may bring any person(s) whom he or she thinks will be able to contribute to his or her presentation to the Committee, and may be advised at his or her own expense by legal counsel, if desired. The post-doctoral fellow must notify the Committee Chairman at least seven days before the hearing if legal counsel will be present. If the post-doctoral fellow is accompanied by legal counsel at the hearing or at any steps where the post-doctoral fellow and a University official meet, University Legal Counsel shall also be present. Neither counsel for the post-doctoral fellow nor for the University may directly address the Committee in any hearing except in answer to a specific question by a committee member. The Post-Doctoral Fellow Appeals Committee hearing will be recorded.

8) The Committee will render a written report containing findings of fact and recommendations regarding the dispute in question to the Dean for consideration.

9) The Dean of the College shall review the hearing proceedings and the report of the appeals committee and render a final decision regarding the grievance and take appropriate action. Any post-doctoral fellow about whom the Committee makes an adverse recommendation to the Dean will have the opportunity to talk with the Dean before the Dean makes a final decision.

(Regents, 12-4-92, 12-3-02, 6-25-08)

XIII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY – SUPPORT OF TRAINEES BY COMPANIES

The "Policy Regarding Conflicts of Interest - Health Sciences Center" is Appendix E of the HSC [Faculty Handbook](#). The following extract applies to postdoctoral fellows (indicated as "trainee[s]").

Section III.F6. Support of Students and Trainees by Companies

The progress and academic standing of students and trainees must never be compromised. Employees supervising students and trainees must inform them in writing of the source(s) of their funding support, disposition of intellectual property, management of proprietary information, and handling of publication rights prior to assigning the students or trainees to a Research or training project supported by a Company.

A student's academic program cannot be supported by a Company in which the supervising Employee has Equity, serves on a Board, or serves as an Operating Officer or Scientific Officer, unless specifically approved in writing by the Dean of the Graduate College and the Senior Vice President and Provost. If approved, support (e.g., stipends, tuition, salary, scholarships) for students and trainees provided by Companies must comply with all of the following provisions:

- (a) The College department, program, or unit approves the recipient;
- (b) The funds are provided to the University;

(c) The recipient is not subject to any implicit or explicit expectation of providing or foregoing something in return for the support; i.e., a “quid pro quo”; and

(d) The Company does not withhold or unreasonably limit publication of the student’s research.

University trainees and students may not be employed by any Company to conduct Research that overlaps with their University training or academic program. In addition, Graduate College policy does not allow a faculty member with supervisory responsibility for an Employee to serve as mentor for the same individual as a student; therefore, any proposed employment of a trainee or student by a Company to work on Company Research that does not overlap with their training or academic program in which the mentor has Equity, serves on a Board, or serves as an Operating Officer or Scientific Officer of the Company must be approved in advance by the Dean of the Graduate College and the Senior Vice President and Provost.