

Postdoctoral Employment Standards **(Last Modified 03.12.2026 by Associate Dean Shelly Campo)**

These standards govern the relationship between the University of Iowa and all postdoctoral appointees [postdoctoral scholars (FP01), NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA postdoctoral research fellows (FP03)] in all matters not explicitly addressed by the applicable funding agency's requirements or the University of Iowa Policy Manual ("Policy Manual").

Introduction

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure consistent administration of university policies, standards, and guidelines to postdoctoral appointees (e.g., scholars and fellows) across the University of Iowa.

General questions regarding the application or interpretation of this document should be directed to the Graduate College's human resources unit. Specific questions regarding application of specific departmental procedures should be directed to applicable departmental human resources representatives.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Definitions

Below are terms to designate temporary, doctoral-level researchers.

"Postdoctoral scholar" and "postdoctoral fellow" are terms used at The University of Iowa to designate temporary, doctoral-level researchers engaged in advanced education and training designed to prepare for an academic and/or research career. The University recognizes three classifications of postdoctoral appointees, depending on the sources of their stipend and research funding, and the nature of their research activities. [III-5.2 Policy Manual](#).

As used in this document, each of the following terms has the indicated meaning:

"Postdoctoral Research Scholars" (FP01) refers to all postdoctoral appointees who are not on an NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) Fellowship grant. Typically, FP01s are engaged in research supported by external grants, contracts, or University of Iowa General Education funds that may be made available to faculty members. This classification also applies to certain types of postdoctoral fellows, including but not limited to fellows under National Science Foundation, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Fellows Program. FP01 appointees typically have specific responsibilities and research expectations directly related to the grant, contract, fellowship, or university-funded program.

"Postdoctoral Research Fellows- NRSA" (FP02) refers to all postdoctoral appointees who are funded by NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) Fellowships. Postdoctoral Research

Fellows are not considered to be university employees. While salary and benefits are administered through the university payroll system, appointees within this classification are not subject to payroll taxes and withholdings. * Terms and conditions of engagement for this appointment type (e.g., paid leave, workers compensation, parental leave) are governed primarily by the NIH. The primary obligation to accomplish the aims of the fellowship rests with the Fellow.

“Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows-” (FP03) refers to a limited number of postdoctoral appointees who are funded by grant awards that require the appointee to be appointed as a “fellow” that are not NIH National Research Service Awards (NRSA) Fellowships. Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not considered to be university employees. While salary and benefits are administered through the university payroll system, appointees within this classification are not subject to payroll taxes and withholdings. * Terms and conditions of engagement for this appointment type (e.g., paid leave, workers compensation, parental leave) are governed primarily by the funding agency. The primary obligation to accomplish the aims of the fellowship rests with the Fellow.

Note: For information concerning the appropriate classification of FP01s and FP02s relative to applicable tax regulations, please see the memo from University Controller’s Office, and the Graduate College (June 1, 2018). Questions can be directed to the Senior Human Resource Director in the Graduate College.

“Postdoctoral Appointee” or “Appointee” refers collectively to individuals holding a current appointment as a Postdoctoral Research Scholar (FP01), Postdoctoral Research Fellow (FP02), or a Non- NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellow (FP03).

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Scope of Coverage

These standards cover all university postdoctoral appointees. Provisions specific to only one of the postdoctoral classifications, as previously described, will be clearly specified below.

Recruitment and Selection

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Recruitment and Selection

Below are requirements for recruiting postdocs to the University of Iowa.

Section 1. Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01)

Minimum Posting Period

Postdoctoral Scholars position vacancies must be posted for at least 3 calendar days as per university policy. However, it is highly recommended that positions are posted for a minimum of 14 calendar days. Available positions should be posted at the following link. <https://jobs.uiowa.edu/>.

Quick Hires

Departments may appoint postdoctoral candidates through the “Quick Hire” process when the candidate is an [internal hire](#) (current UI employees or former UI employees who were employed during the prior 24 months). This most commonly occurs when a University of Iowa student graduates with a terminal degree and transitions into postdoctoral training at the University. Appointments meeting “Quick Hire” criteria are not subject to minimum posting requirements.

Please note that candidates who are appointed through the Quick Hire process are generally not eligible for special compensation as an incentive for hire. In addition, they will not be eligible for a waiver into a faculty appointment unless the original appointment occurred following an affirmative action search process.

Verification of Academic Credentials and Professional Background

Postdoctoral appointments are subject to the background verification standards set forth in [III-9.2\(a\)](#) “Credential Check at Point of Hire” of the Policy Manual.

Previous Research Experience

Candidates for postdoctoral appointments must demonstrate a minimum of two years of research experience at the graduate level (equivalent to such experience in the United States).

Interviews and Reference Checks

Hiring departments are strongly encouraged to conduct interviews and reference checks in consultation with their departmental human resources representatives. Hiring departments are required to conduct reference checks on external candidates. Thorough interviews and careful reference checking are crucial to ensure the university selects the most qualified and prepared postdoctoral candidates.

Hiring without conducting a reference check could lead to institutional liability for negligent hiring if the employee's past performance or conduct may create safety concerns. In such circumstances, the hiring unit may be responsible for any costs associated with such claims.

Criminal Background Checks

As temporary, at-will, employees, criminal background checks for postdoctoral appointees are governed by [III-9.3\(c\)](#) “Criminal Background Check at Point of Hire” of the University Policy Manual. The Graduate College has determined that postdoctoral appointees should be regarded as “security sensitive” employees, and as such, require passage through the criminal background process.

Section 2. Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02)

Postdoctoral fellows are appointed when the individual receives an NRSA NIH fellowship. This NRSA fellowship application is typically written while the appointee is a postdoctoral

scholar (FP01). The length of the appointment is determined by the length of the NRSA NIH fellowship. These positions are almost always full-time appointments.

Section 3. Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03)

Appointment of non-NRSA postdoctoral fellows occurs by exception only and is subject to review and approval by a university committee composed of representatives from University Human Resources, the Graduate College, and grant accounting in the Office of the Vice President for Research. The length of the appointment is determined by the duration of the corresponding fellowship and is almost always full-time. More information regarding the appointment process for this classification is available at the following link: [LINK FORTHCOMING]

Appointments/Compensation

Postdoctoral Employment Standards-Criteria for Appointment as a Postdoctoral Appointee

Below are criteria needed to gain a postdoctoral appointment.

Section 1. Academic Criteria

Academic Criteria. Postdoctoral scholars or fellows must have completed all degree requirements for doctoral or other terminal degree and ensure that written verification has been provided to local HR by the appointment start date. Such written verification consists of an official transcript or letter from the degree-granting institution's graduate college, registrar, or other institutional office certifying that the candidate has completed all necessary requirements for awarding the terminal degree.

Verification of the above-referenced degree requirements/credentials must be conducted in accordance with [III-9.2](#) of the Policy Manual.

Section 2. Professional Training Component Requirement

As specified in [III-5.2](#) of the Policy Manual, postdoctoral appointees are temporary, doctoral-level researchers engaged in advanced education and training designed to prepare for an academic and/or research career. This professional training component requirement is intended to ensure adherence to this intent.

Professional Training Component Requirement. A postdoctoral appointment is a transitional position that trains appointees for academic and/or research careers. This professional training is a defining characteristic of postdoctoral appointments at the university. Upon completion of their professional training, postdoctoral appointees are expected to transition into career roles within the university and/or other scholarly institutions.

Individualized Development Plans (IDP). To facilitate the professional training requirements discussed in the previous paragraph, principal investigators and postdoctoral appointees are

expected to work collaboratively to develop an individual professional development plan that incorporates specific and measurable professional training objectives and timelines. The development process should include a discussion of any time and/or resources that will be required to meet the professional training objectives.

IDP Resources. Postdoctoral appointees' ability to demonstrate preparedness for the next phase of their career typically includes the following outcomes:

1. First authored or co-led publications
2. Presentations at national and international meetings/conferences
3. Contributions to grants or submission of their own grants
4. Mentoring and/or supervising students, postdoctoral appointees with less experience, and research staff as appropriate
5. Connecting and/or collaborating with other researchers within their field or aligned fields

The [National Postdoctoral Association](#) has identified [six core competences](#) in which postdoctoral appointees should gain experience to be prepared for future careers. These are:

1. Discipline specific conceptual knowledge
2. Research skill development
3. Communication skills including writing, teaching, speaking, poster designs, and interpersonal skill
4. Professionalism
5. Leadership and management skills
6. [Responsible conduct of research](#)

Two websites for individual development planning and career exploration are [MyIDP](#) for postdoctoral appointees in the sciences and [Imagine PhD](#) for those in the humanities and social sciences. We encourage postdoctoral appointees and their mentors to use these tools within the first month of a postdoctoral appointment, and to revisit these tools annually to track progress and adapt as needed.

Completion of Training and Transition to Career. As indicated above, upon completing their designated professional training component, postdoctoral appointees are expected to transition to academic and/or research careers. Consequently, those who have fulfilled this training component of their postdoctoral program are not eligible for reappointment, renewal, or extension within a postdoctoral classification at the university. Should an employing unit wish to retain a postdoctoral appointee beyond the completion of their training component, it is advised to pursue an appropriate staff or faculty appointment, in accordance with applicable university policies and procedures.

Section 3. Letters of Appointment. Postdoctoral Appointment Classifications, Work Location

1. Letters of Appointment-

All newly appointed or continuing postdoctoral scholars and fellows shall receive a letter of appointment that specifies the appointment title, duration, and the appointment percentage. Hiring units should use the offer letter templates available in Appendix A. Extensions of appointment beyond an expiring appointment period should be documented through a signed letter of reappointment.

Please note that it is always advisable to update appointments in writing upon their expiration.

2. Postdoctoral Appointment Classifications-

There are three types of postdoctoral appointees at the University of Iowa: postdoctoral scholars (FP01) and NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP03), as defined in the Definitions section.

3. Work Location Requirement-

All postdoctoral scholars and fellows covered under these standards are required to perform their responsibilities on-campus during their term of appointment unless: (a) funding sources and/or the nature of the research requires that the postdoctoral appointee conduct research off campus, or (b) the appointee receives written approval from the Associate Dean for Graduate Education who oversees postdoctoral appointees in the college of appointment.

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01). Upon obtaining the aforementioned collegiate approval, postdoctoral scholars (FP01) must submit a [flexible work arrangement form](#).

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02) and Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows. Upon obtaining the aforementioned collegiate approval, NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP02) and non-NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP03) must obtain approval from the applicable funding agency.

Supervising faculty should contact their local human resources representative to initiate the review and approval process for a postdoctoral appointee to perform work off campus. In addition to receiving permission from the Associate Dean for Graduate Education in the employing college, postdoctoral appointees seeking to work remotely from outside the State of Iowa or the United States will need to obtain approval from the applicable university offices that oversee requests for remote work from locations outside the State of Iowa or the U.S. Supervising faculty should allow for sufficient time to complete the review and approval process. We recommend supervising faculty submit the request at least 30 days before the commencement of the requested remote work. The college will be required to provide a compelling business reason to support remote work from outside the State of Iowa or the U.S.

Any Work from International Locations

Work that is not required to be performed internationally is not permitted. Even when conducting approved university business, UI may restrict access to its systems from

international locations, particularly in (but not limited to) countries that present cybersecurity or research security risks.

International travel to perform *any* paid University of Iowa work a postdoctoral appointee performs outside the United States and Puerto Rico must receive pre-approvals. That process should start at least four weeks prior to expected departure. University of Iowa work includes accessing any electronic campus resources such as emails, software, and/or research drives even for short periods of time. Attending a conference or conducting research as a postdoctoral appointee is university business.

The University requires that your academic needs and physical location be reviewed, approved, and registered relevant UI offices. Not all destinations will be approved depending on cybersecurity, research security, and U.S. State Travel risk levels. Please allow at least four weeks for approval considerations to occur.

Review and complete the steps on [International Programs' webpage](#).

Section 4. At-Will Employment, Length of Appointments, Reappointments, Five-Year Limit and Request for Extension

1. At-Will Employment. Postdoctoral Research Scholars (FP01) are temporary, at-will employees at The University of Iowa as they are appointed for a specified time-period. As temporary, at-will employees, Postdoctoral Scholars may be terminated at any time subject to the discretion of the University. The University typically uses such discretion where there is a lack of satisfactory performance, university related misconduct, or a loss of funding.
2. Length of Appointments. Postdoctoral positions typically are appointed for periods ranging from one year, or one year renewable, up to a cumulative total of five years. The duration of appointment is set to complete the postdoctoral appointee's training component and funding agency specifications when the duration of funding is limited or unknown.
3. Reappointments. Reappointments to extend a postdoctoral appointment may be made so long as the appointee is:
 - a. Continuing to work towards completion of their training component,
 - b. Integral to an ongoing research program,
 - c. Meets criteria for funding, and
 - d. Maintains a record of satisfactory performance.

Reappointment is contingent on the continuing availability of research funding sufficient to meet the University's minimum required salary and fringe rates. Reappointments should be processed at least 30 days prior to the end of the postdoctoral appointee's current appointment.

4. Notification of Nonrenewal. Notification of nonrenewal of a postdoctoral appointment should be provided at least 30 days prior to the end of the postdoctoral appointee's current appointment or at the earliest practicable opportunity.
5. Five-Year Limit and Request for Extension. The postdoctoral experience at The University of Iowa will not extend past 5 years unless there are unusual circumstances that indicate a need to modify or extend their training component. Supervisors who seek an extension should contact the [Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs](#) and the [Senior Human Resources Director](#) for the Graduate College for review and consideration.

NOTE: NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP02) and non-NRSA postdoctoral fellows (FP03) are not considered to be University employees and as such, their continuing appointment status is subject to the terms and conditions of the funding agency.

Section 5. Mandatory Compliance Training

The University of Iowa requires postdoctoral appointees to complete mandatory compliance trainings for position eligibility. Examples include [harassment prevention](#), [responsible conduct of research](#), [human subjects research](#), [animal use](#), [FERPA](#), [conflict of interest in research](#), and/or environmental health and safety related-trainings.

Please note that employing colleges and departments may have additional compliance training requirements.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards – Wages

Wages

Section 1. Minimum Salaries

The University requires that the salaries of newly appointed Postdoctoral Research Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows (FP03), meet or exceed NIH/NRSA minimum salary guidelines, **regardless of the source of funds.**

As of July 1, 2025, all current and new postdoctoral research scholars' and fellows' salaries *must* meet or exceed the 2025-2026 NIH minimum for 0 years of experience (\$62,232). The salary minimum is for a full-time postdoctoral appointee. Those postdoctoral appointees appointed for a lower percentage of time must be provided a salary proportional to the percent appointment (see "appointments" section on standard appointments less than 100%). The employing department may pay beyond the NIH minimum if their budget allows. Departments are expected to make salary adjustments for existing postdoctoral appointees to keep their salaries at or above minimum NIH levels.

The NIH minimum salary for postdoctoral appointees is adjusted each year. The Graduate College will update these minimums following their publication by the NIH. For budget

planning purposes, departments are encouraged to budget for annual salary increases of 3% to maintain postdoctoral salaries in alignment with the NIH minimum.

As of [May 16, 2025](#), NIH *recommends* the following salaries determined by years of experience for FY 2025. The Graduate College recommends that departments follow the guidelines listed below for years of experience levels beyond Year 0, unless budget limitations, documented poor performance, and/or grant requirements make such adjustment impractical or unwarranted.

Years of Experience	Stipend for FY 2025 (updated)
0	\$62,232 (\$5,186 monthly)
1	\$62,252 (\$5,221 monthly)
2	\$63,120 (\$5,260 monthly)
3	\$65,640 (\$5,470 monthly)
4	\$67,824 (\$5,652 monthly)
5	\$70,344 (\$5,862 monthly)
6	\$72,960 (\$6,080 monthly)
7 or more	\$75,564 (\$6,297 monthly)

Budgeting for Postdoctoral Salaries. A reasonable estimate of the new stipend levels, if submitting a grant before the recommendations are released at the beginning of each calendar year, is to project an annual 3% increase in postdoctoral salaries.

If you have salary questions regarding Postdoctoral Research Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows (FP02), or non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03), please contact the Senior Human Resources Director in the Graduate College.

Section 2. Other Forms of Monetary Compensation (FP01s only)

Coming 2026

Postdoctoral Employment Standards – Special Compensation (FP01s Only)

[SPOT Performance Award](#): Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02 and FP03) are eligible for these flexible pay awards. These will be awarded for extra-meritorious performance that may include rewarding a variety of outcomes and behaviors e.g., project completion, sustained high level performance and revenue generation, etc. Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01s) are *not* eligible for SPOT Performance awards.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards – Appointments

Below are details about postdoc appointment letters.

Section 1. Appointment Letters

Postdoctoral Scholar (FP01) Appointment Letters. The appointment letters for postdoctoral scholars (FP01) shall include the effective dates, salary, work schedule, name and contact

information of a supervisor, and notification that health insurance is available (for appointment of 50% or greater) and has deadlines for enrollment.

NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows (FP02) and Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Research Fellows (FP03) Appointment Letters. The appointment letters for postdoctoral fellows (FP02 and FP03) shall include the effective dates, stipend, work schedule, name and contact information of a supervisor, and notification that health insurance is available (for a University of Iowa appointment of 50% or greater) and has deadlines for enrollment.

General Guidelines. Postdoctoral scholars' and fellows' letters will also indicate that the University Benefits Office may be contacted for additional information regarding benefits associated with the appointment. Sample offer letters are included in Appendix A.

- a. **Length of Appointment:** Postdoctoral Research Scholars and Postdoctoral Research Fellows are temporary appointment classifications at The University of Iowa. Postdoctoral positions must be a minimum of one year to allow for adequate training time. For appointments of less than one year, a fixed term staff position or similar appointment is appropriate. For an exception to this minimum, please contact the [Associate Dean of Administrative Affairs](#) or [Senior HR director](#) in the Graduate College. The postdoctoral experience at the University of Iowa will not extend beyond five years except under unusual and well-justified circumstances that directly affect completion of essential training milestones.

To extend the length of the appointment, the department must send a request with justification for an extension at least 3 months before the end of the current appointment to the Associate Dean of Administrative Affairs in the Graduate College. Requests must clearly describe (1) outstanding training or research outcomes, (2) why they were not reasonably achievable within the standard timeframe, and (3) how an extension will prepare the postdoctoral scholar or fellow for the next appropriate career step. If there are delays that were particular to the specific lab or this postdoctoral research scholar or fellow, this should also be provided in the justification. This could include research challenges (e.g., grant delays, gaps in funding, staffing, collaborator delays, travel delays) or personal circumstances (e.g., personal health issue or family member's health issue, birth or adoption of a child, visa delays, etc.).

The request for extension requires approval from both the Associate Dean of Administrative Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate College.

- b. **Postdoctoral Scholars and Fellows are trainees.** Newly appointed postdoctoral scholars or fellows with previous postdoctoral experience may not require the maximum length of appointment to complete the professional training component. If no professional training need exists, a

different staff or faculty job classification should be used.

- c. **Percentage of Appointment as a Postdoctoral Scholar and Postdoctoral Fellow** Standard appointments for postdoctoral appointees include 50 percent, 75 percent, 80 percent, and 100 percent. Appointments other than these require prior approval from the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs and the Senior HR Director in the Graduate College. The appointing department or unit should not use nonstandard appointments to avoid paying minimum salaries or salary increases as required.

- d. **Nonstandard appointments**

Requests for appointment percentages other than those identified in the preceding paragraph should be directed to the Associate Dean of Administrative Affairs and the Senior HR director in the Graduate College.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards – Additional Appointments, Compensation, and/or Duties

Section 1. Teaching/Instruction

Teaching. While the [University Policy Manual](#) section 17.17 (6) allows for faculty and staff to teach courses from time to time in addition to their full-time positions, this is not allowable for temporary employees including postdoctoral scholars (FP01). If principal investigators would like a postdoctoral appointee (FP01) to teach a course, the postdoctoral appointment should be reduced by an amount corresponding to the teaching obligation and a second appointment (e.g., an adjunct or instructor appointment) should be added for the length of the teaching appointment. In no event shall the combined appointment exceed 100%. Exceeding 100% is also not advisable for postdoctoral fellows (FP02) as their primary responsibility is the NIH NRSA grant. Principal investigators should consult with their local human resources representative to determine appropriate employment options for temporary instructional assignments.

Other On-Campus Assignments or Appointments. If principal investigators would like a postdoctoral appointee (FP01) to engage in other paid campus employment that benefits professional development, the postdoctoral appointment should be reduced by an amount corresponding to the other employment obligation and a second appointment (e.g., an adjunct or instructor appointment) should be added for the length of the additional appointment. In no event shall the combined appointment exceed 100%. Principal investigators should consult with their local human resources representative to determine appropriate employment options for temporary instructional assignments.

Section 2. Impermissible Types of Compensation for Postdoctoral Appointees

FP01 appointees are *not* eligible for the following types of compensation:

1. SPOT Awards <https://hr.uiowa.edu/pay/workforce-operations/hr-transaction-system-guidelines/special-compensation-guidelines#heading11741>
2. Exceptional Performance Awards

Please note that postdoctoral monetary awards may *not* be processed as academic awards, including but not limited to scholarships, fellowships, stipends, or honoraria. Instead, they must be processed as special compensation subject to university rules and guidelines.

Personnel

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Onboarding/Orientation

Onboarding and orientation help ensure postdoctoral appointees have a smooth transition to the University of Iowa and to their new role. Please see Appendix B for sample checklists that provide guidance for local HR, mentors, and postdoctoral appointees. Employing units are encouraged to maintain the completed document in a manner most suitable for their specific needs.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Performance Evaluation Best Practices

At the beginning of each appointment, the principal investigator/mentor should provide the postdoctoral appointees with their performance expectations for the position. This should include any expectations for effort allocation, productivity, teaching or research methods, and communication requirements. The principal investigator/mentor should also provide the criteria on which any job performance evaluation will be made, such as frequency and timing of performance evaluations.

Annual performance evaluations are an important management tool that provide a timely, structured, and systematic method of communicating essential performance-related feedback. Principal investigators/mentors are strongly encouraged to conduct performance evaluations with postdoctoral appointees on an annual basis. Principal investigators/mentors should consult with their local human resources representative regarding performance evaluation best practices.

1. The postdoctoral appointee should be evaluated based upon criteria solely related to their performance of duties, skills, and professional development. Forms and criteria used for performance evaluations may vary by college/unit. Each college/unit may develop its own standard scale for evaluating postdoctoral appointees. The evaluation form shall include an overall assessment of the postdoctoral appointee's performance.
2. The evaluator should review all evaluations with postdoctoral appointees. The postdoctoral appointee should sign the evaluation form to indicate that the evaluation has been discussed with the postdoctoral appointee and that the postdoctoral appointee has received a copy of the evaluation. The signature of the postdoctoral appointee does not necessarily mean that the postdoctoral appointee agrees with the evaluation. Postdoctoral

appointees shall have five (5) working days to provide a written response to or comments on their evaluations. Such response and/or comments shall be attached to the evaluation.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Performance Management and Documentation

It is important to address any performance concerns with postdoctoral appointees as soon as is practicable through professional and respectful oral communication in partnership with your local HR representative. Conversations about performance concerns should be conducted in-person where possible. Such conversations should also be followed with written communication summarizing the conversation. The Associate Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs or their designee responsible should be contacted prior to the meeting with the postdoc to discuss the matter. It is considered best practice to engage in performance management prior to moving to termination when poor performance is the cause.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Termination of Appointment

Despite the temporary and at-will nature of postdoctoral appointments, it is essential to maintain institutional standards of due process to ensure fairness and equity in all employment actions. Accordingly, principal investigators are required to consult with the senior human resources representatives from the employing unit and Graduate College *prior to* initiating any termination process for postdoctoral appointees, regardless of whether the termination is based on poor performance, misconduct, or a loss of funding.

In circumstances involving the possible termination of international postdoctoral appointees, local human resources representatives must consult with the Office of International Students and Scholars at <https://international.uiowa.edu/ISSS> or Faculty and Staff Immigration Services at <https://hr.uiowa.edu/support/faculty-and-staff-immigration-services> regarding visa implications prior to initiating any employment-related action that would result in the early termination of an appointment.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Issues of General Application (Policy)

Postdocs are expected to maintain a standard of conduct and take department training.

Section 1. Standards of Conduct

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA Postdoctoral (FP03) covered under these standards are expected to maintain satisfactory performance within the context of their position responsibilities and to comply with standards of conduct promulgated by the university, their college, and department. When operating within the context of their university employment, a university workplace, and/or a university research environment, Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03) are expected to conform to the same ethical, performance, and conduct standards as university staff. The applicable ethics and conduct policies include but are not limited to:

- [Chapter 3 - Human Rights](#)
- [Chapter 4 - Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [Chapter 10 - Violence](#)

- [Chapter 11 - Anti-Retaliation](#)
- [Chapter 12 - A Drug Free Environment](#)
- [Chapter 14 - Anti-Harassment](#)
- [Chapter 18 - Conflicts of Commitment and Interest](#)
- [Chapter 16 - Ethics and Responsibilities for University of Iowa Staff](#)
- [Chapter 19 - Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources](#)
- [Chapter 27.6 - Ethics in Research](#)
- [University of Iowa Work Rules](#)
- [State of Iowa, Board of Regents policy manual 4.2 - Free Speech](#)

Section 2. Training

Departmental Training

At the beginning of each appointment, the department shall review any work rules or departmental policies relevant to the appointment, including but not limited to departmental standards of conduct, the access and use of office supplies and equipment (including computers, printers and copiers related to employment as determined by the employer), and any health, safety, and security policies that may be relevant to their employment. Any questions regarding these rules and policies during the term of the appointment should be addressed to the individual supervisor or their designee.

General Training Requirements

The University of Iowa typically requires postdoctoral appointees to complete mandatory trainings for position eligibility. Examples include [harassment prevention](#), [human subjects research](#), [animal use](#), [responsible conduct of research](#), and/or environmental health and safety related-trainings.

Federally Mandated Responsible Conduct of Research Training

All postdoctoral scholars/fellows engaged in research activities funded by federal agencies MUST complete the Collaborative Instructional Training Initiative (CITI) web-based training within 30 days of starting their appointment and complete an in-person approved Responsible Conduct of Research course within one year. Training must be repeated every four years or when training level changes (e.g., from postdoctoral scholar/fellow to faculty on an NIH K-series award).

Please note that some departments/programs/colleges mandate this training for all postdoctoral appointments regardless of funding source.

More information may be accessed at the following link: [Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

Section 3. Health and Safety

The University agrees to provide a safe work environment for postdoctoral appointees consistent with applicable state and federal regulations.

Section 4. Personnel Files

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01)

1. The University should maintain personnel files for postdoctoral scholars. Only documents that pertain to the individual's employment and/or job performance may be included in such files.
2. To the extent personnel files are maintained, postdoctoral scholars have the right to inspect their personnel files at a reasonable time and place as scheduled by the Employer. Access to personnel files will be limited to authorized representatives of the University, the employee, and a representative if so designated in writing by the employee.
3. A postdoctoral scholar shall have the right to respond to all materials contained in their personnel file. Such responses shall be attached to the related report and become part of the personnel file.
4. A postdoctoral scholar may request in writing removal of any item in their personnel file. Such request for removal must be received no later than ninety (90) days after placement of the item in the file. The written request shall also contain a rationale for the requested removal. If the dean of the appointing college/unit and the dean of the Graduate College agree, the item shall be removed from the personnel file. If the dean of the appointing college/unit and the dean of the Graduate College deny the request for removal, they will notify the postdoctoral scholar in writing within thirty (30) days from the date of written request, including the reason for denial.

The postdoctoral scholar shall have the right to copies.

Grievance Procedure

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Grievance Procedure

Postdoctoral appointees who have questions or concerns regarding an allegation or complaint may contact their local HR representative to discuss.

Section 1. Grievance Definition

A grievance shall be an allegation or complaint involving an actual or perceived harm or injury within the scope of the employment relationship and/or working conditions as described in these standards. In no event shall the grievance procedure be construed to modify a covered employee's temporary at-will status with the University.

Section 2: Rights of Grievant

1. No Retaliation. No retaliatory action shall be taken against a grievant because they utilized these procedures in good faith or participated as a witness in a proceeding.

2. **Grievance Preparation.** Principal investigators are encouraged to provide the grievant(s) with a reasonable opportunity to prepare for grievance meetings.
3. **Support Person.** The grievant may be accompanied at any step of this procedure by a witness observer or support person. If the support person is a staff member, this person will be released from duty without loss of pay to attend the meeting during scheduled work hours. Such release time shall be scheduled with their supervisor so as not to interfere with their normal work responsibilities.

Step One

The postdoctoral appointee will submit a written grievance form (see appendix) to the local HR representative and departmental/program administrator/executive officer. The written grievance form must be submitted within fourteen (14) calendar days of discovery of the event causing the actual or perceived harm or injury. The above-specified time limits for submission may be extended upon mutual written consent of the parties. In no event shall a grievance be filed more than twelve (12) months after the occurrence of the event giving rise to the alleged harm or injury. Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the written grievance, the supervisor and/or principal investigator will meet with the postdoctoral appointee to review the basis for the grievance and whether a mutually acceptable resolution may be reached. If a mutually acceptable resolution is not reached, the supervisor and/or principal investigator will provide a written grievance response/decision within fourteen (14) calendar days to the postdoctoral appointee, Senior HR Representative, and departmental/program administrator/executive officer. If additional time for the review is required, the departmental reviewing party will notify the postdoc of the new date by which the decision will be made. If the departmental DEO/Director is directly involved in the issue in question, the postdoctoral appointee should proceed to Step Two.

See [Appendix D: Postdoctoral Grievance Form](#)

Step Two

If the issue is not resolved at the departmental level, or if the department's DEO/Director is directly involved in the issue, the postdoctoral appointee will forward the Postdoctoral Grievance Form to the Senior HR Representative for the college in which they are employed within fourteen (14) calendar days of the response and will include documentation of all steps that have already been taken. Within fourteen (14) calendar days of the receipt of the grievance, the collegiate Associate Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs or designee responsible will meet with the parties involved and review the arguments and facts. Upon completion of the review, not to exceed fourteen (14) calendar days, the collegiate associate dean or their designee will provide a written decision/rationale and/or resolution. If additional time for the review is required, the collegiate reviewer will notify all concerned parties of the new date by which the decision will be made.

Step Three

If the issue is not resolved at Step Two, the grievant may appeal the collegiate decision by submitting a written rationale to the Graduate College Dean and the Chief Human Resources Officer/Associate Vice President or their designee that details the reasons for the appeal within fourteen (14) calendar days of the decision. The Graduate College Dean and CHRO/AVP or their designee will respond in writing within thirty (30) calendar days. If additional time for the review is required, the Graduate College Dean will notify all parties of the new date by which the decision will be made. The Graduate College Dean will make the final institutional decision.

Benefits

Postdoctoral Employment Standards: Health Insurance, Paid Leave, Holidays, Retirement, and Other Benefits

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03)

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01), NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02), and non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03) are eligible for a number of university benefits and services. Available benefits may include (as applicable):

- Insurance
- Health & Dependent Care Spending Accounts
- Worker's Compensation (available to FP01 postdocs only)
- Social Security
- Retirement (available to FP01 postdocs only)
- Paid leave
- Well-Being Services

Please see the [Postdoctoral Scholars/Fellows Benefits Page](#) on the University Human Resources website for more information about available benefits for postdoctoral appointees.

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02)

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02) funded by NRSA grants should consult the policies as stipulated by NIH. For example: A summary of parental leave policies for NIH grants can be found [here](#). NRSA fellows may also have [differing leave, part-time, and extension policies](#) that are unique to them.

- [Summary of Leave, Part-Time and Extension Policies Available to NRSA Award Trainees and Fellows.](#)

Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow (FP03)

Non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow (FP03) should contact their funding agency for applicable information on benefits unique to them.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Health Accommodations & FMLA Leave

The Graduate College and Departments will collaborate with University Human Resources Faculty and Staff Disability Services Office (FSDS) or Health Care Human Resources Leave and Disability Administration (LDA) to administer all workplace accommodation needs (including new or ongoing health conditions) for postdoctoral appointee. Workplace accommodation needs are those associated with a health condition that results in a need for time away from work or accommodations while at work. The process for seeking workplace accommodations is provided below.

Accommodation Process and FMLA

Accommodation Process

When a postdoctoral trainee reports that their health is impacting their ability to perform job duties, the postdoctoral trainee may need a workplace accommodation. If so, the postdoctoral trainee should contact their departmental HR representative, or an HR representative in the Graduate College. If a supervising faculty or staff member becomes aware of a potential need for a workplace accommodation, they should contact the applicable departmental HR representative immediately. The departmental HR representative is responsible for submitting a consult form to Faculty and Staff Disability Services (FSDS) or contacting Health Care Human Resources Leave and Disability Administration (LDA) for College of Medicine postdoctoral trainee. Once submitted, the FSDS or LDA team will work with the postdoctoral trainee and the employing unit to determine reasonable accommodations.

FMLA

The Graduate College will collaborate with University Human Resources Faculty and Staff Disability Services Office (FSDS) or Health Care Human Resources Leave and Disability Administration (LDA) and the appointing college to evaluate all requests for FMLA and Non-FMLA leave.

- Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01). Family Medical Leave may apply in situations where a Postdoctoral Scholar (FP01) needs to be absent from work due to a serious health condition. If a Scholar does not meet FMLA eligibility criteria, non-FMLA leave may be applicable.
- NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02) and non-NRSA Fellows (FP03). Postdoctoral Fellows who need to be absent from work due to a serious health condition are not eligible to receive FMLA. However, non-FMLA leaves may apply. As such, Postdoctoral Fellows should check with NIH for any applicable or relevant information regarding eligibility for leave.

FSDS or LDA will work with the department and Scholar/Fellow to determine the appropriate support.

Applicability of FMLA and the Non-FMLA process

- Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01) are considered employees of the University of Iowa and may qualify for Family Medical Leave Act if they meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., worked at the university for at least 12 months and served at least 1250 hours within the 12 months prior to the commencement of the requested leave). The university shall authorize leave requests in accordance with the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 for qualifying events.
- NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02) and non-NRSA Fellows (FP03) paid fully by external funding are not considered an employee of the University of Iowa and therefore should work within the terms and conditions of their funding organization in partnership with their university department or unit if a leave of absence is needed.
- Postdoctoral trainees in need of FMLA or Non-FMLA support should notify their HR representative who can then submit an intake form. Faculty or staff who become aware of a Scholar's/Fellow's need for FMLA or Non-FMLA support should notify the HR representative and request that an intake form be submitted. Once received, the FSDS or LDA team will review the intake information and contact the Scholar/Fellow to pursue appropriate information related to their request. FSDS or LDA will work with the appointing department regarding possible options.

Iowa Paid Parental Leave (IPPL)

As determined by state law, university employees who are eligible for [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA) leave are eligible for Iowa Paid Parental Leave (IPPL). This means that they must have worked for the university for at least 12 months and have worked at least 1250 hours during the previous 12 months. This is open only to FP01 Postdoctoral Scholars. Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02 and FP03) are not employees.

If a Postdoctoral Scholar and/or Fellow would prefer to have a confidential conversation with a member of the FSDS or LDA staff to discuss their health needs, they may schedule an appointment by contacting FSDS at (319) 335-2660 or via email FSDS@uiowa.edu – (include LDA information).

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Course Audit

Postdocs at the University of Iowa are eligible to audit one University of Iowa course per semester without being assessed tuition and mandatory fees.

Postdocs at the University of Iowa (FP01/FP02/FP03) are eligible to audit one University of Iowa course per semester without being assessed tuition and mandatory fees for that course. To qualify for this benefit, the postdoc's supervisor must verify that auditing the course will contribute to their professional development in their current position. In addition, the postdoc must apply as a non-degree student <https://grad.admissions.uiowa.edu/apply/applying-nondegree-graduate-student>.

After applying as a non-degree seeking student, postdocs should fill out the [Application to Audit form](#):

Additional campus services available to postdocs can be found in Appendix C.

Postdoctoral Employment Standards - Travel and Lodging

Postdoctoral Scholars (FP01). When Postdoctoral Scholars are required to travel related to their employment, they will be reimbursed for their travel and lodging expenses consistent with [III-22.1](#) of the Policy Manual.

NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP02) and non-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows (FP03). Postdoctoral Fellows who are required to travel as part of their fellowship will be reimbursed for their [travel and lodging expenses](#) by their funding agency consistent with university policy.

Appendices

- [Appendix A: Sample Offer Letter Template](#)
- [Appendix B: Onboarding Checklists for Postdoctoral Appointees, Mentors, and Local Human Resources Representatives](#)
- [Appendix C: University Resources for Postdoctoral Appointees](#)
- [Appendix D: Grievance Form](#)