POLICY

Issued: January 1, 2011
Revised: 

Contacts for questions about this policy, click here

Postdoctoral research scholars play an important role in the research function of the University. This policy clarifies the terms and conditions of their appointments, as well as the procedures for appointing different types of postdoctoral research scholars.

At Georgia State University (GSU), the postdoctoral research experience emphasizes scholarship and continued research training for individuals who have recently completed a doctoral degree. The postdoctoral research scholar conducts research under the general oversight of a faculty mentor in preparation for a career position in academe, industry, government, or the nonprofit sector. Postdoctoral research work provides essential training that may include opportunities to enhance teaching and other professional skills.

Postdoctoral research scholars contribute to the academic community by enhancing the research and education programs of the university. They bring expertise and creativity that enrich the research environment for all members of the university community, including graduate and undergraduate students. The university strives to provide a stimulating, positive, and constructive experience for the postdoctoral research scholar, by emphasizing the mutual commitment and responsibility of the institution, the faculty, and the postdoctoral research scholar.

This policy defines terms and conditions related to postdoctoral research appointments at Georgia State University. Additionally, postdoctoral research appointees are subject to all other applicable GSU and University System of Georgia (USG) policies and procedures. Exceptions to this policy are expected to be rare and granted only in cases with strong justification. Requests for exceptions must be approved by the department chair, dean, and Associate Vice President for Research (AVP). AVP is responsible for administering the postdoctoral research appointee policy, periodically reviewing the policy for revisions as needed, and taking active steps to encourage compliance with the policy.

This policy does not cover postdoctoral appointees who are involved in clinical, rather than research, training (e.g., at the counseling center).

DEFINITIONS

The definition of postdoctoral research appointee used by GSU includes the following criteria:

• Appointee received a Ph.D. or an equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.V.M., Sc.D., M.D.), usually recently, in a field directly related to the postdoctoral research appointee’s assigned responsibilities;
• Assigned responsibilities of the appointee are substantially research and/or scholarship;
• Appointment is time-limited; and
Appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career.

GSU has three categories of postdoctoral research appointees: Postdoctoral Research Associate, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, and Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct. The latter two positions are restricted to those associates funded by sponsored awards that have terms and conditions that are consistent with the definitions of these awards (e.g., if the award specifies the appointee is paid a stipend with no fringe benefits then the postdoctoral appointee is a fellow, if the funds are paid directly to the fellow for postdoctoral training then the appointee is a fellow-adjunct). Only those awards whose terms and conditions are consistent with the definitions of a fellow can be appointed as a postdoctoral fellow.

The term "postdoctoral research appointee" applies to both Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Research Fellows. Refer to summary table comparing details of appointment types provided within this policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Research Associate</td>
<td>Classified as an employee of the University receiving a salary for required services. While they are in training as they perform work on a research project, this training is secondary to their primary role as an employee. This enables the University to provide essential services and benefits, including employee health insurance, workman’s compensation, and other benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Research Fellow</td>
<td>Primarily have educational or training status. Fellow is paid a stipend for which no service is required and therefore no taxes are withheld nor is the individual entitled to fringe benefits. The stipend is administered by GSU and is funded by a sponsored award (e.g., a NRSA postdoctoral fellowship training grant is awarded to GSURF and administered by GSU). Fellows also have access to GSU-related services (e.g., parking, library, recreational services, computer, and email access, group health insurance benefits available to graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows, workman’s compensation etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct</td>
<td>Primarily has educational or training status. Fellow-Adjunct is paid a stipend for which no service is required and therefore no taxes are withheld. The stipend is paid directly to the recipient by the external agency. He/she is appointed as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct for the purposes of providing GSU-related services (e.g., access to parking, library, recreational services, computer and email access, group health insurance benefits available to graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows, but not workman’s compensation etc.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POLICY DETAILS

The University has adopted the following set of performance expectations of postdoctoral research appointees:

1. conscientious discharge of assigned duties;
2. adherence to ethical standards, which prior to assuming duties, includes a background investigation;
3. compliance with good laboratory practices and recognized university standards;
4. open and timely discussion with the mentor regarding research progress, distribution of reagents;
or materials, or any disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications;
5. collegial conduct toward coworkers;
6. publication of research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor; and
7. compliance with all sponsor, GSU, and USG policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, observation of established guidelines for research involving biohazards, human subjects, or animals, as well as GSU’s Policy on the Responsible Conduct of Research Training.

Postdoctoral Research Associates must follow all GSU employment procedures that include completing payroll and benefits forms (as detailed on the GSU Human Resources web site). Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Postdoctoral Research Fellows-Adjunct will be entered into GSU’s system with $0 compensation via the payroll system and a record made of the stipend to be paid.

Postdoctoral Research Associates may participate in GSU employee health insurance, whereas Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Adjuncts are not considered employees and may acquire their own private health insurance or may choose to participate in the group health insurance plan offered to GSU graduate students. In many cases, fellowship stipends or accompanying allowance payments are expected to be used to secure health insurance. Appointees must follow the terms and conditions of their award. Check the summary table comparing details of appointment types provided at the end of this policy. This policy does not cover postdoctoral appointees who are involved in clinical, rather than research, training (e.g., at the counseling center).

**PROCEDURES**

*Revised: September 25, 2013*

**Appointment Procedures**
The unit that is hiring the appointee is responsible for ensuring all procedures are completed. The unit is responsible for housing a personnel file for postdoctoral appointees (associates, fellows, and adjuncts) that contain the following:

1. Curriculum vita
2. Official transcript (English or notarized translation)
3. The award notification for postdoctoral fellows and fellow-adjuncts who have been personally sponsored by an external agency
4. Offer letter

As part of their orientation to GSU, the Postdoctoral Research Associates, Fellows and Adjuncts must obtain a GSU Panther ID Card, providing access to physical facilities and online services, including access to libraries, access to recreational facilities, parking, etc. All must complete right-to-know and safety training through GSU Environmental Safety Division and other new hire training. Because these are training positions, they do not have to be advertised.
Procedure for Appointment of a Postdoctoral Research Associate

There are two scenarios with different procedures for the appointment of a Postdoctoral Research Associate:

1. Individual is specifically named as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the award or a postdoctoral position is specified in the agency-approved budget:
   a. Principal Investigator (PI)/Designee must submit to the Sponsor-Funded HR Liaison
      i. Background authorization form
      ii. Agency-approved Award Budget and Budget Justification (with named individual or approved postdoctoral position)
      iii. Curriculum vita
   b. Candidate can be offered a “conditional hire” pending background check.
   c. HR Liaison will forward these documents to Payroll, Benefits and Human Resources (PBH) for the individual’s personnel file.
   d. Employment will send a new hire packet and sponsor-funded postdoctoral offer letter to the employee.
   e. Hiring department will complete a PAF and submit to PBH at least 5 business days prior to the hire date.
   f. Employee will submit a completed new hire packet and signed offer letter to PBH.
   g. Employee is benefits-eligible and should contact PBH to complete appropriate documentation for health insurance and payroll.

2. Postdoctoral Research Associate is a new position and not specified in an award:
   a. PI/Designee must complete a Sponsor-Funded Position Review “short form” and submit to Sponsor Funded HR Liaison for approval.
   b. Sponsor Funded HR Liaison approves position (notifies PI/Designee).
   c. Candidate can be offered a “conditional hire” pending background check.
   d. PI/Designee must submit to the Sponsor–Funded HR Liaison
      i. Background authorization form
      ii. Curriculum vita
   e. HR Liaison will forward these documents to PBH for the individual’s personnel file.
   f. Employment will send a new hire packet and sponsor-funded postdoctoral offer letter to the employee.
   g. Hiring department will complete a PAF and submit to PBH at least 5 business days prior to the hire date.
   h. Employee will submit a completed new hire packet and signed offer letter to PBH.
   i. Employee is benefits-eligible and should contact PBH to complete appropriate documentation for health insurance and payroll.

Note: Postdoctoral Research Associates will be appointed with the job title Postdoctoral Associate AC. The job title Postdoctoral Associate AD will be used for Postdoctoral Clinical Associates who are engaged in clinical, rather than research, training. The Policy for Postdoctoral Research Appointees does not apply to those engaged in clinical training.
Procedure for the Appointment of a Postdoctoral Research Fellow

The unit in which a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Fellow-Adjuncts appointed is responsible for the following:

A. Housing a personnel file that contains fellows:
   1. Curriculum vita
   2. Official transcript (English or notarized translation)
   3. The award notification that specifically funds stipends for postdoctoral fellows and fellow-adjuncts
   4. Offer letter signed by the fellow that includes annual compensation and terms of appointment

B. The unit must submit the appropriate paperwork for payroll processing at least 10 business days in advance.

There are three scenarios with different procedures for the appointment of a Postdoctoral Research Fellow:

1. Postdoctoral Fellow is an existing employee at Georgia State University:
   a. A “Fellowship Request Form” (available on HR website) and a copy of the award are submitted to PBH (Felecia Donald).
   b. The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will be paid a monthly stipend.
   c. Appointee may sign up for health insurance at www.studentinsurance.com and select Georgia State University and the post-doc option. Payment is made by the post-doc directly to the company.

2. Postdoctoral Fellow is a new appointment to Georgia State University:
   a. A “Fellowship Request Form” (available on HR website) and a copy of the award is submitted to PBH (Felecia Donald).
   b. The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will be paid a monthly stipend.
   c. A “new hire” package along with I-9 certification must be completed by the fellowship recipient within 3 days of being on campus at PBH.
   d. Background investigation approval will be part of the “new appointment” process.
   e. Appointee may sign up for health insurance at www.studentinsurance.com and select Georgia State University and the post-doc option. Payment is made by the post-doc directly to the company.

3. Postdoctoral Research Fellow – Adjunct:
   a. A “Fellowship Request Form” (available on HR website) with $0 compensation and a copy of the award is submitted to PBH (Felecia Donald).
   b. Background investigation approval will be part of the “new appointment” process (if not current employee).
   c. Appointee may sign up for health insurance at www.studentinsurance.com and select Georgia State University and the post-doc option. Payment is made by the post-doc directly to the company.
Term of Appointment
The maximum term of appointment for a postdoctoral research appointee at this institution is seven years. This limit is based on federal guidelines and the tenet that postdoctoral research appointments are primarily for training, which has a natural duration. The term refers to the total time spent at GSU as a postdoctoral research appointee and does not include time spent at the University as an undergraduate or graduate student or as a postdoctoral research appointee at other institutions. The seven-year term limit may be interrupted for extended medical or family leaves. Exceptions to the seven-year term limit will be considered by AVP; these are expected to be rare and will be approved only in cases with strong justification based on the need to complete additional training, not to complete additional work.

Appointing units should ensure that postdoctoral research appointees do not exceed the seven-year term limit. AVP periodically will review postdoctoral research appointments to ensure compliance. If the maximum term of appointment is reached, a postdoctoral research appointee must be moved into an established position or separated with a minimum ninety days’ notice. Established positions appropriate after a seven-year postdoctoral research appointment include:

- Research Scientist I
- Research Scientist II
- Research Scientist Senior

A postdoctoral research appointee may be terminated prior to the seven year term limit with a minimum:

- Ninety days’ notice if the funding supporting a Postdoctoral Research Associate ends
- Two weeks’ notice for failure to adhere to the expectations described above
- No notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated (including those detailed in Federal, Georgia State University, or Board of Regents policy)

Note: Any change in funding supporting postdoctoral research appointees should be communicated to the appointee as soon as possible. If a postdoctoral research appointee holds a GSU visa sponsorship, the GSU Office of International Education must be contacted prior to informing the scholar of termination.

Mentor
The postdoctoral research appointee should be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member in the unit to which the postdoctoral research appointee is assigned. Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the work and advanced training of postdoctoral research appointees. In that role, at the time employment or training begins, faculty mentors should provide the postdoctoral research scholar with a written description of assigned duties and expectations together with a description of the goals and objectives of the training program. Faculty mentors should regularly and frequently communicate with postdoctoral research appointees, provide regular and timely assessments of performance at least annually, and provide career advice and job placement assistance. Faculty mentors are expected to supervise Responsible Conduct of Research Training.
Evaluation
Recognizing that Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Research Fellows are in growth positions and striving for professional advancement, they are entitled to formal evaluations by their faculty mentors and this process is strongly encouraged by the University. In accordance with University policy, evaluations should occur on at least an annual basis, with an effort to link evaluations to annual stipend or salary raises when feasible based on funding. Written evaluations, appropriately customized for the context, are strongly encouraged so that these form the basis of continuing conversations and future evaluations.

Compensation
Compensation for postdoctoral research appointees at Georgia State University should reflect their advanced training and degree. The University suggests a minimum annual starting salary of $30,000 FTE (applicable FY2010), with reasonable annual increases consistent with typical employee raises as well as the realities of grant funding. AVP will periodically reassess the minimum compensation in consultation with appropriate groups. For Postdoctoral Research Fellows, the terms of the award will dictate stipend amount and any increases; these are outside the jurisdiction of Georgia State University.

Leave
Postdoctoral Research Associates are eligible for 10 hours per month of paid annual leave and 8 hours per month of sick leave. There is no provision for leave payout upon separation. Leave for Postdoctoral Research Fellows are determined by the terms and conditions of their award.

Retirement Program
Postdoctoral Research Associates have the option of participating either in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia or an Optional Retirement Plan. More information is available on the HR website. There is no retirement program for fellows.

Grievance
Postdoctoral research appointees have access to the same grievance policy as regular employees.
## Summary Table of Postdoctoral Research Position Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research Associate</th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research Fellow</th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research Fellow Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term of Appointment</strong></td>
<td>7 years max.</td>
<td>7 years max.</td>
<td>7 years max.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Stipend</td>
<td>Stipend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Award administered by</strong></td>
<td>GSURF (if external sponsor)</td>
<td>GSURF</td>
<td>Fellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended Minimum Salary</strong></td>
<td>$30,000/yr FTE</td>
<td>(set by sponsor)</td>
<td>(set by sponsor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Tax Owed</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Tax Withheld</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1099 or W2 Filed by GSU</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GSU Panther Card</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GSU Parking Eligible</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GSU Services (library, etc.)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background Investigation</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right-to-Know Training</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible Conduct of Research Training</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retirement Benefits</strong></td>
<td>TRS or ORP</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Insurance</strong></td>
<td>Employee insurance</td>
<td>Group (student and fellow) insurance offered</td>
<td>Group (student and fellow) insurance offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Contribution</strong></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>According to Sponsor</td>
<td>(sponsor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Leave</strong></td>
<td>10 hours/month</td>
<td>according to sponsored funding guidelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick Leave</strong></td>
<td>8 hours/month</td>
<td>according to sponsored guidelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Fellows should consult the award program and IRS guidelines concerning income tax requirements.

2Consistent with other sponsored funded positions, there is no leave payout after the sponsored funded position ends. Specifically, accrued paid time off (e.g. vacation and sick time) must be used during the time of the postdoctoral fellowship; accrued paid time off may not be paid upon termination of employment or taken after the end of the funding period.

3It is the responsibility of the postdoctoral fellow and his or her mentor to adhere to the guidelines.
## RESPONSIBILITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Postdoctoral Research Appointee   | The University has adopted the following set of performance expectations of postdoctoral research appointees:  
• conscientious discharge of assigned duties  
• adherence to ethical standards, which prior to assuming duties, includes a background investigation  
• compliance with good laboratory practices and recognized university standards  
• open and timely discussion with the mentor regarding research progress, distribution of reagents or materials, or any disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications  
• collegial conduct toward coworkers  
• publication of research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor compliance with all sponsor, GSU, and USG policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, observation of established guidelines for research involving biohazards, human subjects, or animals, as well as GSU’s Policy on the Responsible Conduct of Research Training |

| Mentor                            | A faculty member in the unit to which the postdoctoral research appointee is assigned and supervised that provides guidance and monitors the work and advanced training of the appointees; determines and communicates assigned duties and expectations; provides regular assessment of performance, career advice and assistance with job placement. |

## CONTACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of policy and related questions</td>
<td>Associate VP for Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions related to hiring procedures</td>
<td>Human Resources Administration</td>
<td>(404) 413-3306</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tbattle@gsu.edu">tbattle@gsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>