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 Vice President for Research (VPR). The VPR 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><strong>Postdoctoral Research Associate</strong></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><strong>Postdoctoral Research Fellow</strong></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><strong>Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct</strong></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 research/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 and GUIDANCE**

*Revised: August 3, 2021*

**Position Titles to Which This Document Pertains**
Despite the myriad of positions titles that may be considered by investigators to be at the “postdoctoral” career stage, these procedures only pertain to those including the term “postdoctoral” in the position title.

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 relevant compliance and safety training through the University Research Services & Administration. Because these are training positions, they do not have to be advertised like other staff positions.

**Procedure for Appointment of a Postdoctoral Research Associate**
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 for degree (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 (conditional and final)

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 (sfp@gsu.edu).
      i. Background authorization form requesting background check for desired candidate
      ii. Agency-approved award budget and budget justification (with named individual or approved postdoctoral position)
      iii. Curriculum vita of the desired candidate
   b. Your department/college HR officer will forward these documents to Payroll, Benefits and Human Resources (PBH) for the individual’s personnel file and to get the position entered into OneUSG.
   c. Once the position has been entered into OneUSG, a candidate may be provided an offer letter offering “conditional hire” from the hiring department/unit pending they pass the background check (and VISA approval for foreign candidates).
   d. Employment will send a new hire packet and sponsor-funded postdoctoral offer letter to the conditional candidate.
   e. Once the candidate passes the background check, the hiring department will complete a PAF and submit to HR at least 5 business days prior to the hire date.
   f. Employee will submit a completed new hire packet and signed offer letter to HR as instructed.
   g. Employee is benefits-eligible and should be provided with and 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) and gets the position entered into OneUSG.
   c. Once the position has been entered into OneUSG, a candidate can be offered a “conditional hire” from the hiring department/unit pending completion of and they pass a background check (and VISA approval for foreign candidates).
   d. PI/Designee must submit to the Sponsor–Funded HR Liaison (sfp@gsu.edu)
      i. Background authorization form requesting background check for the desired candidate.
      ii. Curriculum vita of the desired candidate.
   e. Department/college HR officer will forward these documents to the individual’s personnel file.
f. Once the candidate passes a background check (and obtains approved VISA if foreign candidate), HR 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 HR at least 5 business days prior to the hire date.
h. Employee will submit a completed new hire packet and signed offer letter to HR as instructed.
i. Employee is benefits-eligible and will be provided with and should 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 for degree (English or notarized translation)
   3. The award notification that specifically funds stipends for postdoctoral fellows and fellow-adjuncts
   4. Award notice or offer letter signed by the fellow that includes annual compensation and terms of appointment/award
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 along with the form.
   b. The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will be paid a monthly stipend.
   c. Appointee is responsible for obtaining and paying for their own health insurance, but mentors/departments may provide the funds to cover the cost for this so that obtaining a fellowship is not financially punitive to the fellow.
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 along with the form.
   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.

d. Background investigation approval will be part of the “new appointment” process.

e. Appointee is responsible for obtaining and paying for their own health insurance, but mentors/departments may provide the funds to cover the cost for this so that obtaining a fellowship is not financially punitive to the fellow.

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 along with the form.
   b. Background investigation approval will be part of the “new appointment” process (if not current employee).

**Term of Appointment**

The postdoctoral term of appointment refers to the total time spent at GSU as a postdoctoral research appointee (in a position with postdoctoral in the title) and does not include time spent at the University as an undergraduate or graduate student or as a postdoctoral research appointee at other institutions. It should be noted that some post-doctoral appointees that are hired on visas may have limits on the number of years they may be in that position. Investigators should get more information about this from the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) when they hire postdocs on visas (https://isss.gsu.edu/).

Postdoctoral positions are training positions and considered steps on a career ladder to the professoriate or into some permanent position within their profession. As such, mentors are expected to approach postdoctoral hires with a limited term of employment in mind and are encouraged to share with their postdocs expectations for moving up the career ladder (e.g. provide goals to meet, skills to develop, responsibilities to take on, etc.). Although, the average term of a postdoctoral appointment varies by discipline, Faculty mentors are expected to do their best to move their postdoctoral mentees along a career path towards permanent faculty or professional employment within a timeframe that is reasonable. GSU has established positions that are reasonable steps between the postdoctoral level and the professoriate or other permanent career positions that may be considered.

**Mentor**

The postdoctoral research appointee should be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member in the unit (or multiple mentors when the training is interdisciplinary) 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. In addition, as mentioned above, Faculty mentors are expected to do
their best to move their postdoctoral mentees along a career path towards permanent faculty or professional employment within a timeframe that is reasonable. Finally, 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 appointment should be set at 1 FTE with reasonable annual salary increases consistent with typical employee raises as well as the realities of the grant funding that may be paying the salary. 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; however, postdoctoral associates may be eligible for unemployment and should contact HR to learn more. 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 in the standard staff retirement plan, but Fellows do not. As with health insurance, mentors/departments may provide additional funds towards the Fellow’s retirement investment to make up for the loss of university contributions during the period of the fellowship. More information is available on the HR website.

**Grievance**
Postdoctoral research appointees have access to the same grievance policy as regular employees.

**Termination**
A postdoctoral research appointee may be terminated for the following reasons:
- 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)
Postdoctoral Research Appointees
Policy No. GSU: 6.20.22
University Research Services and Administration

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 Office of International Initiatives must be contacted prior to informing the scholar of termination.

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions related to hiring procedures</td>
<td>Initial step: Hiring Dept/College HR personnel 2nd step: When Dept/College cannot assist, contact Human Resources Administration at <a href="mailto:sfp@gsu.edu">sfp@gsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sfp@gsu.edu

Page 8 of 8