Postdoctoral Appointment Policy

Postdoctoral appointments in the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD) are made in conformity with this policy, implemented by the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Education (SADGE).

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Definition of a Postdoctoral Appointee

A Postdoctoral Appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship. It is a transitional position and is viewed as preparatory for an academic and/or research career. The appointee is not part of a clinical training program. The appointee was recently awarded the PhD or equivalent doctorate, works under the supervision of a faculty member and has the freedom and is expected to publish the results of his/her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment.

- **A Postdoctoral Associate** is supported from research funds on grants or other external or internal funding sources and is expected to perform specific work for the University (work on a specific research project, teaching, etc.). A Postdoctoral Associate is an employee of the University and is paid through the University with a fringe rate collected on the salary.

- **A Postdoctoral Fellow** is supported from a grant that prohibits the individual from being considered an employee (as determined by the terms of the Sponsored Research grant or funding entity). In cases where the grant/fellowship terms regarding whether the researcher should be an employee are not specific, the terms must be reviewed by the Office for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs for classification determination. Factors such as whether the funding source reimburses for our fringe rate may be considered in reaching a determination.

- **A Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow** is being paid a stipend by an agency outside the University.

*Please note: postdoctoral appointees with multiple types of funding dollars may need to have multiple appointments in HRMS. Administrators should review the [Process for Appointing Postdocs with Dual Appointments](#) for more information.*

General Conditions of Appointment

Written Offer

All Postdoctoral Appointments are to be made through an offer letter that provides the specifics of the appointment and is signed by both the Postdoctoral Appointee (“Appointee”) and his or her supervising faculty member (“Advisor”). The letter must be co-signed by the Office for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs. The letter must also be co-signed by the department chair/center director who will be administratively responsible for the appointment. If the person responsible for the funding source is not the Advisor or the department chair/center director, that person must also co-sign the offer letter. All internal signatures should be obtained prior to sending the letter to the candidate for their signature.

Approved templates for offer letters are located on the [GEPA forms website](#). The SMD requires the use of these templates for *all* postdoctoral appointee offer letters. Any offer letter that varies from the template must be submitted to GEPA for approval prior to use, with an explanation of the reason for the
change. A copy of the signed offer letter, the Postdoc Information Form, and the Postdoctoral Appointee’s CV must accompany the initial appointment form.

**Appointment and Reappointment Guidelines**

Postdoctoral appointments are for an agreed upon period, up to a maximum of one year, with a specific starting date. As a general rule, the total time spent in postdoctoral appointments by a given individual should not exceed five years, including postdoctoral experience at other institutions. Exceptions to such guidelines should be granted only after careful review by the department and approval of the SADGE.

During the course of postdoctoral education and training, it is recognized that the source of funding for this appointment may vary, such that the individual may move between Postdoctoral Associate (PDA), Postdoctoral Fellow (PDF) and Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow (VPDF) status, with an associated change in benefits. While a change in postdoctoral employment classification does not necessarily impact the scope, responsibilities and duration of this position, such a change requires that the individual be notified in writing in accordance with the above offer letter guidelines. The faculty member and the department should inform the PDA/PDF/VPDF in advance that there will be implications for certain benefits. Refer to the Summary of Benefits for Postdoctoral Appointees: [http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/pd-benefit-summary.pdf](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/pd-benefit-summary.pdf)

The regulations that pertain to original appointments apply to reappointments and should also be governed by the following considerations:

- Reappointment requires satisfactory research or scholarship performance as determined by the Advisor, and continuation of funding for the position.
- Reappointment should be made at the same or higher salary or stipend except in the rare circumstance where there is an appropriate reason to reduce the salary or stipend.
- Written notice of reappointment or non-reappointment should be provided to the Postdoctoral Appointee in writing at least 60 days prior to the end of the current appointment. If there are extenuating circumstances requiring a shorter time frame for notice (e.g. uncertainty concerning continuation of funding), this should be communicated in writing to the PDA/PDF/VPDF at least 60 days prior to the end of the appointment by the Advisor and department chair, with the specific reasons for the delay. If such notice of the delay is not given, or if such notice is given, but a subsequent notice of non-reappointment is not given at least 30 days prior to the end of the appointment, the appointment will continue for 60 days following the date of notice of non-reappointment.

Approved templates for notices of reappointment and non-reappointment are located on the [GEPA forms website](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/pd-benefit-summary.pdf). The SMD requires the use of these templates for all postdoctoral appointee notices of reappointment and non-reappointment. Any letter that varies from the template must be submitted to
GEPA for approval prior to use, with an explanation of the reason for the change. See Appendix A for details on the documentation requirements for offer, reappointment, non-reappointment and termination letters.

**Maximum 5-Year Term Limit**
As noted above, the total time spent in postdoctoral appointments by a given individual should not exceed five years, including postdoctoral experience at other institutions. Departments are expected to appropriately transition current postdoctoral appointees exceeding the 5-year limit at the end of their current appointment period or sooner.

Exceptions to the 5-year limit may be made in the following circumstances. Approval from the SADGE is required:

1. When the postdoctoral appointee has four years of postdoctoral experience at another institution (or institutions) prior to coming to UR. In such cases, one additional year of postdoctoral training will be permitted.
2. When there is an available postdoctoral training grant slot available.
3. When the postdoctoral appointee is awarded a postdoctoral fellowship that requires they be appointed as a postdoctoral appointee.
4. Please note that time spent on leave of absence (for example, for the birth of a child) will not be counted toward the 5-year limit.

Departments may discuss transition options for postdoctoral appointees with the Office for Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs and/or with the Office of Academic Affairs. Options include, but are not limited to, promotion to a staff, research or academic appointment or non-reappointment. A decision guide for considering staff vs. faculty appointments may be found at: [http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/smd/academic-affairs/documents/guide-for-staff-vs-rap.pdf](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/smd/academic-affairs/documents/guide-for-staff-vs-rap.pdf)

Please note that available transition options will require the H1-B visa status. Thus, departments transitioning postdoctoral appointees in the J visa status should be planning for this transition at least one year in advance in order to ensure a timely transition.

**Responsibilities of the Advisor**
Moving a junior scientist and/or scholar toward an independent, productive and satisfying career is the goal of postdoctoral training. The Advisor has the responsibility of providing a postdoctoral training experience that will foster the individual’s intellectual, technical and professional development. The Advisor is expected to treat the Postdoctoral Appointee as a colleague while at the same time mentoring him or her in the performance of high quality research leading to timely publication. Mentoring also
includes encouraging and helping the Appointee to define and develop a career direction and to prepare publications, presentations and applications for extramural support.

Postdoctoral Appointees shall not be exploited nor their research and scholarship training compromised in the service of sponsored research or for the financial gain of the Advisor. See the Guidelines on Research Integrity and Conflict of Interest: Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Appointees, which are incorporated into this policy by reference.


Annual performance evaluation must be conducted by the Advisor for each Postdoctoral Appointee as noted below.

**Responsibilities of the Postdoctoral Appointee**

Postdoctoral Appointees have obligations to their Advisors, to the SMD and to the University of Rochester. These include conscientious and ethical efforts to accomplish the research and/or teaching responsibilities outlined at the time of acceptance of the appointment, and compliance with good laboratory practice, including the maintenance of adequate research records and care for unique facilities, equipment and special materials such as animals and cell lines. The Appointee must discuss research findings with the Advisor and avoid disclosures of confidential or proprietary information without the Advisor’s consent, behave with congeniality and respect for colleagues, and conform to applicable policies. The University of Rochester Policy on Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer (http://www.rochester.edu/ventures/for-ur-innovators/for-inventors-university-policy-on-intellectual-property-and-technology-transfer/), by which the University acquires, retains and protects rights in intellectual property and tangible research property produced by University personnel or with the significant use of University resources, applies to Postdoctoral Appointees.

See the Guidelines on Research Integrity and Conflict of Interest: Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Appointees, which are incorporated into this policy by reference.


The Postdoctoral Appointee is required to update his or her Individual Development Plan on an annual basis (at a minimum), as noted below.

**Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Annual Evaluation**

The Postdoctoral Appointee is expected to create an IDP. In creating and developing the IDP, the Postdoctoral Appointee will work with his/her research advisor and other mentor(s) where appropriate. The IDP maps out the general path the Postdoctoral Appointee wants to take and helps match skills and strengths to career choices. Since needs and goals will evolve over time, the IDP should be revised and
modified on a regular basis, no less that annually. Links to useful tools and templates to facilitate this process are listed below.

- myIDP by Science Careers - myIDP is a unique, web-based career-planning tool tailored to meet the needs of PhD students and postdocs in the sciences
  http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/
- FASEB-developed IDP for Postdocs
- FASEB Sample Annual Review for Postdocs
  http://www.faseb.org/portals/0/pdfs/opa/SampleAnnualReview.pdf

### Annual Evaluation
The Advisor and the Postdoctoral Appointee must jointly complete the Annual Evaluation form (link below). A copy of the completed and signed Annual Evaluation must be submitted to GEPA with the Postdoctoral Appointee’s reappointment paperwork. Reappointment approval will not be granted without submission of the Annual Evaluation.

http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/postdoc-annual-evaluation.pdf

### Research Integrity
The University of Rochester seeks excellence in pursuit of knowledge and scholarship and requires all members of the University community to adhere to the highest standards of responsible conduct and integrity in research. Should a violation of research integrity and/or research misconduct appear to occur, the University of Rochester Policy on Research Misconduct, which applies to Postdoctoral Appointees, contains the details of procedures to be followed.

http://www.rochester.edu/orpa/_assets/pdf/compl_miscon3.pdf

### Responsible Conduct of Research Training
Postdoctoral Appointees are required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research education by completing the Ethics and Professional Integrity in Research course. The training must be completed as soon as possible upon the start of appointment at the University of Rochester. This 8-week course is offered during the fall semester only, typically during September and October. Additional course and waiver information can be found at:

http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/professional-development/research-ethics.aspx#Policy

Depending on their start date, Postdoctoral Appointees may also be required to complete Biomedical Responsible Conduct of Research, offered online by CITI.

https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp
Resolution of Disagreements
When the Advisor and Postdoctoral Appointee cannot themselves resolve a disagreement relating to the appointment, the issue will be presented to the department chair or center director for their consideration, and, failing resolution at that level, the chair or director should refer the matter and a recommended solution to the SADGE. Ordinarily, the SADGE’s decision is final. However, if the matter is still in dispute, either party may submit it to the Dean of the School of Medicine and Dentistry, who may elect to review the decision and may modify it, or decline to hear it. There are no appeals beyond this.

Resignation
If a Postdoctoral Appointee elects to resign his or her appointment prior to the ending date indicated in the appointment letter or subsequent written understandings, the Appointee is expected to provide a minimum of one month’s notice.

If the Appointee is a foreign national in a temporary nonimmigrant worker status they should inform the International Services Office of the resignation by completing the Scholar Departure Form:
www.iso.rochester.edu/travel/depart/scholar

Early Termination of Appointment
Postdoctoral appointments may terminate early under the following circumstances:

Circumstances of Early Termination

Lack of Funding
It is expected that all postdoctoral appointments will be made for a term that is shorter than the funding for the position. However, if the funding supporting the appointment unexpectedly ends early, the appointment may be terminated with a minimum of 60 calendar days written notice.

Termination for Unsatisfactory Performance
A Postdoctoral Appointee may be terminated due to unsatisfactory performance only after the Advisor has first notified the Appointee of his or her specific deficiencies. The notice should be made in writing, with a copy to the SADGE. The notice should provide a reasonable period of time to remedy any deficiencies that can be remedied. If the identified deficiencies are not remedied within the time allowed, then the Advisor may, with the advice and consent of the department chair (or center director) and approval of the SADGE, terminate the appointment of the Postdoctoral Appointee.

In those circumstances in which the need to terminate a Postdoctoral Appointee is more pressing than the process described above will allow, the matter may be presented to the SADGE for review. If it is determined by the SADGE that an immediate termination, or suspension pending further investigation or procedures, is warranted, such immediate actions will be taken.
Written Notice of Early Termination
The approved early termination letter template for lack of funding is available on the GEPA forms website. The SMD requires the use of this template for all early termination letters for lack of funding. Any letter that varies from the template must be submitted to GEPA for approval prior to use, with an explanation of the reason for the change.

The Advisor and department or center administrator should consult GEPA for assistance with termination letters based on unsatisfactory performance. GEPA will consult the Office of Counsel as appropriate.

Regardless of the circumstances of the early termination, if the Appointee is a foreign national in a temporary nonimmigrant worker status, the department should inform the International Services Office of the termination and request the foreign national to complete the Scholar Departure Form: www.iso.rochester.edu/travel/depart/scholar

Property
When departing the University of Rochester, whether at the end of an appointment or due to resignation or termination, the Postdoctoral Appointee must leave behind with his or her Advisor all original laboratory notebooks, data, specific reagents and study elements such as cell lines, unique compounds and University property. All these should be left in a condition that will permit uninterrupted continuation of the work.

Minimum Base Stipend/Salary
The stipend or salary paid to a full time Postdoctoral Appointee may not be below the minimum base stipend/salary (MBS), which is set annually by the SADGE, in reference to National Institutes of Health (NIH) increases in postdoctoral entry-level training stipends for the National Research Service Awards (NRSAs).

The current MBS for all new and currently appointed Postdoctoral Appointees is $39,323/year.

As of December 1, 2016, the MBS for all new and currently appointed Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows will be $47,476/year.

As of December 1, 2016, the MBS for all new Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows will be $47,476/year.

Postdoctoral appointments will ordinarily be made on a full-time basis. Part-time postdoctoral appointments are only permitted on an occasional, case-by-case basis, and are subject to prior approval of the SADGE. The stipend/salary for a part-time appointee must not be lower than the percentage of the MBS that corresponds with the percentage effort.
When extramural agencies establish salaries or stipends at a rate less than the MBS, and the University elects to proceed with such an appointment, the department is required to provide additional funding to bring the pay level of the Postdoctoral Appointee up to the MBS.

Provided satisfactory performance and progress, departments are strongly encouraged to provide annual pay increases for Postdoctoral Appointees similar to Wage and Salary increases provided to School of Medicine and Dentistry staff.

Postdoctoral Appointees may not be “self-funded”. Funding for pay must come from the University of Rochester or from clearly documented external sources, not from the Postdoctoral Appointee’s personal funds or savings.

**International Postdoctoral Appointees**

Note that for Appointees in H1B or J-1 temporary work authorization status, there may be additional requirements on the stipend/salary level the University provides.

- For H1Bs, federal law requires that the employer “pay nonimmigrants at least the local prevailing wage or the employer’s actual wage, whichever is higher, and pay for non-productive time.” [http://www.iso.rochester.edu/employment/workers/h1bwork.html](http://www.iso.rochester.edu/employment/workers/h1bwork.html)
- For J-1 wage requirements, see: [www.iso.rochester.edu/employment/scholars/j-eligibility](http://www.iso.rochester.edu/employment/scholars/j-eligibility)

Contact the International Service Office for additional information: [www.iso.rochester.edu](http://www.iso.rochester.edu)

**Benefits**

**Absences with Pay**

**Vacation and University Holidays**

Postdoctoral Appointees are entitled to take 2 weeks (10 business days) of paid vacation per year in addition to standard University holidays (New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day) in accordance with University and NIH policies. All vacation must be approved in advance by the Advisor. Vacation may be carried forward for a maximum of one year and must be tracked at the departmental level.

**Medical Leaves of Absence and Personal Time**

For extended medical leaves, Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for statutory medical pay (medical pay required by New York State) beginning with the eighth calendar day of absence for a qualified disability. Statutory benefits provide half pay for as long as 26 weeks with a maximum of $34 per day or $170 per week.
• Postdoctoral Associate eligibility: immediate
• Postdoctoral Fellow eligibility: immediate*
• Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow eligibility: not eligible

*Medical leave for a NIH NRSA-funded Postdoctoral Fellow must first be discussed with the department’s grants administrator and ORPA Research Administrator.

Extended personal leaves and the associated terms of such leaves may be granted and determined at the discretion of the Advisor. Extended personal leaves must be tracked at the departmental level.
Note: the University of Rochester policy 357 on Leaves of Absence for Faculty and Staff does not apply to Postdoctoral Appointees.

**Parental Leave**

For Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows (PDAs/PDFs) are provided up to 8 weeks of paid leave for the primary care giver following the birth or the adoption of a child.* During this period, PDAs/PDFs may postpone research and academic activities but remain active full-time postdoctoral appointees, with access to university facilities (including health insurance, library privileges, and housing) and to university faculty and staff.

While PDAs/PDFs will continue to be fully funded from any existing funding sources during the leave period, they will be excused from regular teaching or research duties. However, it is the PDA’s/PDF’s professional responsibility to work with her/his Advisor to prepare for the absence in advance of the leave. This includes reviewing the status and continuation of research projects, adequately preparing those who will assume teaching responsibilities during the PDA’s/PDF’s absence, and arranging for a smooth transition in any other responsibilities.

Eligible PDAs/PDFs are required to notify their Advisor of the date of their intended time away at least 60 days prior (when possible) to the expected date of childbirth or adoption. Parental leave must be tracked at the departmental level.

* Note: These guidelines are consistent with the NIH Grants Policy Statement – parental leave (10/10). For those on NIH training grants, the use of parental leave must be approved by the Training Grant PD/PI.

For Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows

Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible for parental leave.
Absences without Pay

*Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*
Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows are subject to the same FMLA procedures and requirements as University of Rochester staff. University of Rochester’s FMLA policy may be viewed at: [http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/358.pdf](http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/358.pdf)

Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible for FMLA.

*Leaves of Absence*
Extended personal leaves and the associated terms of such leaves may be granted and determined at the discretion of the Advisor. Extended personal leaves must be tracked at the departmental level.
Note: the University of Rochester policy 357 on Leaves of Absence for Faculty and Staff does not apply to Postdoctoral Appointees.

*Employee Assistance Program (EAP)*
All Postdoctoral Appointees are eligible to take advantage of the services of the EAP. [http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/eap/](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/eap/)

*Health Care Benefits*
All Postdoctoral Appointees are eligible to participate in the University of Rochester Postdoctoral Scholar Benefit Program with Garnett-Powers & Associates. [http://www.garnett-powers.com/rochester/](http://www.garnett-powers.com/rochester/)

*Retirement Plan 403b*
Postdoctoral Associates and Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible to make voluntary tax-deferred contributions or after tax Roth contributions.

Visiting Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible to make contributions.

*Additional Information Regarding Benefits Eligibility*
Additional information regarding benefits eligibility for Postdoctoral Appointees: [http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/pd-benefit-summary.pdf](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/home/documents/pd-benefit-summary.pdf)

*Policy Against Harassment and Discrimination*
The University of Rochester is committed to maintaining an environment free of harassment and discrimination. University Policy 106 (Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment) prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of age, color, disability, ethnicity, gender expression and gender identity, marital status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex (including sexual harassment), sexual orientation, veteran status, and any other status protected by law. This important
Policy applies to all Postdoctoral Appointees and we recommend that you become familiar with the Policy so that you understand options available to address concerns.

- Policy: http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106.pdf
- Report Form (Word): http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106_request_formal_resolution.doc
- Report Form (pdf): http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106_request_formal_resolution.pdf

**HIPAA Privacy and Security**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a federal regulation that mandates standards to protect the privacy and security of patients’ medical information. Privacy refers to maintaining confidentiality and safeguards of all Protected Health Information (PHI) whether in electronic, written, or oral form. Any use or disclosure of PHI must be permitted by the Privacy regulations. Security refers to the measures that are taken to protect electronic protected health information (ePHI) from loss, theft, damage or unauthorized access.

All Postdoctoral Appointees in the School of Medicine and Dentistry are required to view the HIPAA Privacy and Security Training Video at: http://bb.rochester.edu/enroll/user_enroll.cfm?enrollmentID=3b7n

**It is important to remember:**

You have an ethical and legal responsibility to protect patient information (clinical, demographic and financial) and for reporting inappropriate behavior of others. Patients and workforce members should call the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) Integrity Hotline at 585-756-8888 to report concerns, complaints, or violations.

You must have a job-related reason, or be permitted by policy, to access any patient’s PHI. You are not permitted to access PHI of any patient that is a family member or friend because they have asked you to, or because you hold a power of attorney or a health care proxy. MyChart is available to patients to access their health information or give proxy access to someone else for MyChart only.

Your password is your electronic signature. You must never share your password with anyone, for any reason, ever. Each user is responsible for all information accessed or entered under his or her user ID/password. Do not leave your computer session unlocked or unattended.

Do not open e-mail attachments you were not expecting. Do not click on links in e-mail messages you were not expecting. Do not access Web sites that are not work-related or not well-known brands. Taking these actions may lead to your system becoming infected with malware.
You should consider more secure alternatives (on servers, use of Virtual Private Network, etc.) before storing any PHI on a portable device such as a laptop computer or USB/jump drive or on media such as CDs or DVDs. If you must store PHI on a portable device or media, it must be encrypted.

URMC HIPAA website link which contains the HIPAA Policy Manual, HIPAA Highlights & other training materials: http://intranet.urmc-sh.rochester.edu/policy/hipaa/

Identification Cards
The University of Rochester photo ID card issued to all Postdoctoral Appointees permits access to University facilities, serves as official University identification and provides proof of eligibility to use various University services such as library loans, check cashing and free or reduced admission charges for University functions. These ID cards must be worn at all times while on University premises.
http://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/371.pdf

Other Policies
Postdoctoral Appointees are subject to the generally applicable rules, regulations and policies of the University of Rochester and SMD, including but not limited to those relating to intellectual property, conflicts of interest, sexual harassment, respect for diversity, academic honesty and campus safety and security.

Changes
The SMD reserves the right to make changes to this policy from time to time. No period of advance notice is required to make such changes. Please refer to our website for the most up-to-date version.
http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/trainee-handbook/policies-benefits/policies-and-benefits-for-postdoctoral-appointees.cfm
## Appendix A

**Guidelines for Offer, Reappointment, Non-Reappointment and Termination Letters for Postdoctoral Appointees**

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<th>Signed Letter Required with 520 Form</th>
<th>Letter Required (does not need to be included with 520 form)</th>
<th>Annual Evaluation Form Required with 520 Form</th>
<th>CV Required with 520 Form</th>
<th>Postdoc Info Form Required with 520 Form</th>
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