

*The Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees at the University of Pennsylvania has been revised since its most recent publication in January 2008 ([www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v54/n17/policy.html](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v54/n17/policy.html)). Updates have been made to the sections on Vacation and Mentor-Approved Flexibility of Observed Holidays and Winter Break and New Child Leave, effective immediately.*

*The University reiterates its support for postdoctoral scholars, defined as individuals who have received doctoral degrees (or the equivalent) and are engaged in a finite period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue their careers. Penn's policy is applicable to all postdoctoral scholars across the University regardless of their discipline.*

—Vincent Price, Provost

—Steven J. Fluharty, Senior Vice Provost for Research

## Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees at the University of Pennsylvania

### Preamble

Postdoctoral trainees (PDTs) come to the University for further training in their chosen discipline. An individual who has been designated as a PDT by her/his School receives training conducted in an apprenticeship mode under the supervision of an established faculty member who serves as a mentor. As dictated by the nature of the program, the trainee may be undertaking scholarship, research, service, and teaching activities, all of which provide training essential for career development. Because education is a pre-eminent mission of the University and because PDTs are professionals in training, it is important that PDT programs be designed to advance their careers. This policy is intended to address the distinct position of PDTs in the University community.

This policy applies to all three categories of postdoctoral trainees that are identified in the payroll system of the University, based upon funding source: postdoctoral researcher (supported from a research grant), NRSA-postdoctoral fellow (supported by an individual or institutional National Research Service Award), and postdoctoral fellow (supported by a private foundation, non-profit charitable organization, or other source). Funding sources may have their own guidelines governing participation in their programs. In instances where these guidelines differ from the University policy, the guidelines of the funding source take precedence.

### Appointment and Resignation

#### Letter of Appointment

When a faculty member offers an appointment to a PDT candidate, a letter should be written to the candidate prior to commencement of duties. This letter should set forth the period of appointment (dates of appointment), the stipend amount, any benefits and a statement that the candidate's appointment is subject to all University policies. The letter must be accompanied by a copy of the University Patent Policy and the corresponding Participation Agreement. If the appointment is renewed or extended, that action should be documented by a letter, which includes the aforementioned information.

The candidate should be required to return a countersigned copy of each letter of appointment or renewal indicating acceptance of the terms set forth, as well as a signed Patent Policy Participation Agreement. The letters (countersigned copies) and signed agreement should be placed in a permanent file kept in the office of the appropriate Department. (If the faculty member is not affiliated with a specific department, the file may be kept in the office of the Institute or Center with which the faculty member is associated.) The letters of appointment and renewal should indicate whether the mentor has available funding to fulfill the terms of the appointment; if not, the letter should indicate the duration of assured funding. When the appointment is to be coterminous with external funding, research grant, contract, training grant, etc., that fact should be included in the letter of appointment, including the end date of the funding even if renewal is expected.

#### Proof of Doctoral Degree

Eligibility for appointment as a PDT requires a candidate to hold, or to have completed the requirements for, an advanced degree, e.g. PhD, MD, or equivalent. Candidates from non-US universities must hold advanced degrees equivalent to those awarded in US institutions in order to qualify for appointment as postdoctoral fellows. It is the candidate's re-

sponsibility to provide transcripts and/or a diploma certifying that she/he has received her/his degree, and it is the mentor's responsibility to review this documentation and ensure that it is satisfactory and included in the candidate's file. Candidates who have completed the requirements for an advanced degree, but not yet been awarded such degree, must be able to demonstrate in a manner verifiable by the University that such requirements have been completed. In no event shall a PDT be reappointed without the degree having been awarded.

#### Duration of Appointment

Postdoctoral appointments are for one year, and may be renewed annually based on satisfactory performance and availability of funding. Under current University policy, no person may be a PDT at Penn for more than five years.

#### Termination

Mentors may terminate a PDT *during an appointment period* for any reason on three months' written notice. Under certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to terminate a PDT immediately. In such event an appropriate administrative office (e.g. the Office of Biomedical Postdoctoral Programs, or the Office of the Vice Provost for Research) must be consulted and approve the termination.

#### Stipend Level

Minimum stipend levels for PDTs are set annually by the Vice Provost for Research, in consultation with the Provost's Council on Research, representing all of the Schools of the University. If these minimum stipend levels cannot be offered, a proportional (%) appointment should be made to indicate clearly that the appointee is entitled to seek and perform additional University services (teaching, diagnostic laboratory, technical) up to the mandated annual stipend level. When a funding sponsor mandates stipend levels higher than the University minimum, mentors are obligated to pay the higher amount.

#### PDT Notice of Resignation

PDTs are expected to provide at least one month's notice of resignation. When appropriate to the discipline, it is the obligation of the PDT to ensure that all research materials and records are left in a state to allow continuation of the project.

### Benefits and Leave

#### Health Insurance

PDTs are required to have health insurance. PDTs are eligible to receive single person insurance, as provided under the Basic University of Pennsylvania Postdoctoral Insurance Plan. This benefit is in addition to the stipend, and no premium should be deducted from the PDT's stipend. If the PDT elects family coverage, the difference between the single and family premium can be paid from one of three sources: (1) it can be deducted from the PDT's stipend; (2) it can be paid by the funding source if it is an allowable expense; or (3) it can be paid by the unit that recruited the PDT. If the PDT elects to waive health insurance coverage through the University, she/he must certify that she/he has alternate health insurance that provides at least comparable coverage.

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### **Vacation and Mentor-Approved Flexibility of Observed Holidays and Winter Break**

In any appointment year, a PDT may elect to take up to ten University business days as paid vacation days, on which days the PDT will continue to receive his or her stipend. PDTs are also entitled to the eight official holidays observed by the University and are eligible to take the University's special winter vacation, during which time the University is typically closed. If a PDT wishes to work and/or perform research during an official holiday or special winter vacation, s/he can use the equivalent time as additional paid vacation days. PDTs forfeit any unused vacation days or holidays at the end of any appointment year. All vacation must be approved in advance by the mentor; additional vacation may be approved at the mentor's discretion.

### **Sick Leave**

PDTs may continue to receive stipends for up to 15 University business days of sick leave per year. PDTs forfeit any unused sick leave at the end of the appointment year. Under exceptional circumstances, a period of leave due to illness or incapacity may be extended at the discretion of the mentor. Mentors may request medical documentation from a health care provider for any extended absence. Additional sick leave may be approved in the discretion of the mentor.

### **New Child Leave**

PDTs are entitled to receive stipends for no more than 60 calendar days of leave per appointment year for adoption or birth of a child. Either parent is eligible. PDTs must discuss the use of new child leave in advance with the mentor. A mentor may not deny a request to use new child leave without the authorization of the appropriate administrative office. Unused sick leave or vacation days may be used, with approval, to extend the period of new child leave. Additional new child leave may be approved at the discretion of the mentor.

### **Unpaid Leave**

PDTs requesting extended periods of time away from their training experience, including leave in excess of available sick and/or parental leave, must obtain approval for a leave of absence without stipend continuation. Approval for such leave must be requested and approved by the mentor *in advance*.

## **Obligations and Responsibilities**

### **Obligations of Mentors**

Mentors' responsibilities include: (i) developing in consultation with the PDT a mutually satisfactory research project or scholarly program; (ii) encouraging PDTs to present their work and to publish their results in a timely fashion; (iii) encouraging PDTs to acquire and enhance their knowledge and technical skills as dictated by their current and future needs; (iv) arrangement and oversight of teaching opportunities as appropriate to their discipline and program; (v) encouraging PDTs to apply for training and research support as appropriate; (vi) meeting regularly with their PDTs to discuss progress in their research; (vii) providing an annual review of performance; (viii) insuring that PDTs are aware of University policies regarding postdoctoral training and are instructed about research policies of the University; (ix) providing career counseling.

### **Obligations of Postdoctoral Fellows**

PDTs have certain obligations to their mentor, the group in which they are working, the Department with which they are associated, the sponsor whose funds support them, and the University. These obligations include but are not limited to: (i) the conscientious discharge of their research, scholarly, and teaching responsibilities, as applicable; (ii) conformity with ethical standards in research and scholarship; (iii) compliance with good scholarly practice including the maintenance of adequate research records; (iv) observation of appropriate guidelines regarding human subjects and due observation of University standards regarding use of isotopes, chem-

icals, infectious agents, animals, and the like, if applicable; (v) open and timely discussion with their mentor regarding possession or distribution of tangible property such as materials, reagents, and the like; (vi) discussion of laboratory records or scholarly materials, if relevant; (vii) prior disclosure of appropriate scholarly information, findings or techniques proposed for dissemination privately, at scholarly meetings, or in publications; (viii) collegial conduct toward all members of the University community; (ix) compliance with all applicable University policies.

### **Research Records**

Primary research records created by PDTs during the tenure of their training at the University of Pennsylvania are the property of the University and are retained by the University when the PDT leaves. Although PDTs may photocopy such records, they must first review with their mentors the records they propose to copy.

Exceptions to this practice may be granted, subject to written prior approval of the Provost's office, in fields where it can be convincingly demonstrated that there is a well-established practice that individual scholars retain ownership of data generated through their research efforts. In such cases the PDTs will be permitted to retain notes and records associated with their research and publish their findings subsequent to leaving the University, provided an appropriate acknowledgement is made of the University's contribution to the work (e.g. in the form of funding).

## **Training**

### **Orientation**

A compendium of information should be given to each PDT upon arrival at the University. This compendium should be available on an appropriate University website and could include a registration form to be completed by the PDT; a copy of these guidelines; conflict of interest and financial disclosure policies; intellectual property policies; Procedures Regarding Misconduct in Research; the sexual harassment policy and non-discrimination policies; parking policies; a clear statement about benefits; information regarding taxation; a list of sources of information within the University; and information regarding the Office of the Ombudsman. Preferably, orientation sessions should be provided for all new PDTs. The departments should arrange e-mail accounts for their PDTs.

### **Training Program Elements**

PDTs are considered to be professionals in training. One goal of their professional experience at Penn is to provide training relevant to the responsible conduct of research. Such training should include the following elements, as appropriate to the individual trainee: (i) data management, ownership of intellectual property and tangible research materials; (ii) mentor/trainee responsibilities; (iii) publication practices and responsible authorship; (iv) peer review; (v) rights of collaborators; (vi) human subject research; (vii) research involving animals; (viii) research misconduct; (ix) conflict of interest; and (x) compliance with existing Federal and University policies. When PDTs engage in teaching, appropriate training and didactic experience should also be provided.

### **Application for Grants**

Each School should establish a policy, consistent with section 1.5 of the *Sponsored Projects Handbook* (online at [www.upenn.edu/researchservices/manual/sponsoredprojects handbook.html#\\_Toc84300102](http://www.upenn.edu/researchservices/manual/sponsoredprojects handbook.html#_Toc84300102)) regarding whether PDTs may apply for grants as principal investigator. If School policy permits such applications, it is suggested that the School require approval by a knowledgeable member of the standing faculty as well as the appropriate department chair's and dean's endorsement and chair's acceptance of responsibility.

### **Office of the Ombudsman**

It is recognized that from time to time disagreements may arise between a PDT and a mentor. PDTs should be clearly informed about the options they can exercise under such circumstances. In particular, they should be made aware of services available through any ombudsmen in individual Schools, and through the University's Office of the Ombudsman.