Boston College
Postdoctoral Research Fellow Policy

Introduction

Boston College ("the University") recognizes the importance of assisting Postdoctoral Research Fellows ("Postdoc Fellows") as they develop into independent investigators. Postdoc Fellow appointments offer advanced degree recipients a period in which to extend their education and professional training. The breadth of the academic community together with the physical resources in its libraries and laboratories make the University an ideal environment for postdoctoral training.

While the University seeks to provide Postdoc Fellows with the opportunity to continue their academic training through on-site practice experience, many aspects of the relationship between the University and its Postdoc Fellows are also that of an employer-employee relationship. Therefore, the University has adopted this Postdoctoral Research Fellow Policy (the "Policy") to delineate the obligations and expectations of all parties involved in Postdoc Fellow training. All Postdoc Fellows and Faculty Mentors must comply with the requirements set forth in this Policy. Any questions about the Policy should be directed to the University's Office of the Vice Provost for Research ("VPR").

1. Definition, Purpose, and Eligibility of Postdoctoral Research Fellow

1.1 Definition and Purpose: A Postdoctoral Research Fellow is an individual holding a doctoral degree or equivalent who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training. The principal purpose of a Postdoc Fellow appointment is to acquire the professional skills needed to pursue an independent career path of the Postdoc Fellow's choosing. A Postdoc Fellow is an employee of the University and shall work under the direct supervision and mentorship of the Faculty Mentor. The Faculty Mentor must hold a tenure-track position. Appointments primarily involve full-time research or scholarship and may include teaching responsibilities. See Appendix 1 for the Affordable Care Act's guidelines on calculating teaching hours. The appointment shall be temporary (see Section 3 – Terms of Appointment).

1.2 Eligibility: To be eligible for a Postdoc Fellow appointment, an individual must hold a Ph.D., M.D., J.D. or equivalent terminal degree from a recognized institution of higher learning. Evidence of the degree must be provided to the VPR from the Faculty Mentor. When a candidate has completed all of the requirements for a degree, but the degree has not been conferred, the candidate may present evidence of completion of the degree, together with a statement of the date on which the degree is to be conferred. If the
degree is not conferred by the projected date, the Postdoc Fellow appointment shall be terminated. Candidates with non-U.S. degrees will be required to provide proof of degree equivalency as determined by each school at the University.

2. **Appointment of Postdoctoral Research Fellow**

2.1 **Initiating Appointment:** Individuals interested in a Postdoc Fellow appointment should directly contact the Faculty Mentor and the appropriate academic department in which the candidate is seeking the appointment. In advance of the initial appointment, the terms and conditions of that appointment should be discussed and agreed upon by the Postdoc Fellow and the Faculty Mentor. This should include agreement on the anticipated length of appointment, scope of work (e.g., research project), training goals, expectations of an annual research progress and mentoring (e.g., publication expectations, teaching, etc.), sources and amount of salary/benefits and research support, and possibly other details such as plans or expectations to submit fellowship applications, office space, lab, and supporting equipment such as computers.

2.2 **Appointment Offer Letter and Approval Process:** When a Faculty Mentor makes a decision to appoint, the Faculty Mentor will create an offer letter using the template approved by the VPR, found in Appendix 2. This offer letter shall be made prior to the commencement of duties. The offer letter must include the following:

- The term, title, and schedule of the appointment;
- Duties and responsibilities of the appointee;
- Duties and responsibilities of the faculty mentor;
- Period of appointment;
- Level of support;
- Source of support;
- Stipend level and period of time for which funding support is guaranteed;
- Statement of the expected obligations of the appointee during the training period;
- Statement of teaching responsibilities, if any, associated with the appointment; and
- A copy of this Policy.

The offer letter must be approved and co-signed by the Faculty Mentor, Department Chair, VPR, and Vice Provost of Faculties, if applicable. The VPR must approve the final offer if the Postdoc Fellow is to receive either grant or start up funds. The Vice Provost of Faculties must approve the final offer only if funding for salary, benefits, and/or research support is requested from the University or department. After all approvals have been obtained, the Faculty Mentor may then send the offer letter to the Postdoc Fellow.
The Postdoc Fellow appointee must acknowledge the terms of the appointment by signing and returning the offer letter to the Faculty Mentor. A copy of the final letter with all signatures must be sent to the VPR.

3. Terms of Appointment

3.1 Full-Time Appointments: Individuals ordinarily hold Postdoc Fellow appointments on a full-time basis (40 hours/week) for no longer than four (4) years. The total term of Postdoc Fellow appointments may not exceed six (6) years including previous postdoctoral experience at other institutions. Extensions may be granted in exceptional cases (see Section 4.1, below) by the VPR and will be reviewed annually.

3.2 Part-Time Appointments: The University maintains that effective and meaningful training for Postdoc Fellows requires full-time commitment by the scholar and the University. As such, Postdoc Fellows at Boston College are ordinarily appointed in full-time status.

However, this Policy does allow for part-time appointments on a limited, case-by-case basis. If a part-time appointment is requested by the appointee, such request must be clearly stated in the offer letter, with the understanding that the appointee may perform and be compensated for additional University services or outside employment, up to but not exceeding full-time. Moreover, evidence must be provided that such a part-time appointment is consistent with the rules of the funding source and with the visa requirements of appointees who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Part-time appointments must be approved by the VPR.

In instances where part-time appointment requests are approved, if the part-time appointee’s salary does not meet the minimum annual (non-FTE) salary required by the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”), then the Postdoc Fellow shall be classified as non-exempt. As such, the Postdoc Fellow will be eligible for overtime pay at one and one half time his or her regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of 40 in a week. For all hours worked in excess of his or her regular work schedule up to 40 in a week, the Postdoc Fellow will be paid his or her regular hourly rate. A work week is defined as Sunday to Saturday, based on the University weekly payroll cycle. All hours worked for each week will be submitted and tracked through the Kronos payroll system.

4. Extension and Termination of Appointment

4.1 Extension of Appointment: At the end of the term, the appointment may be eligible for extension based on satisfactory performance, the existence of funding,
programmatic need, and continuing visa eligibility (for international scholars). Should the Faculty Mentor and Postdoc Fellow agree to extend a Postdoc Fellow appointment beyond the term defined in the initial offer letter, the Faculty Mentor shall submit a written request for approval to the VPR 60 days prior to the end of the appointment. Appointments can be extended on a yearly basis and will be reviewed annually by the VPR. In exceptional cases, the appointment may be extended beyond the six year limit, which is inclusive of postdoctoral experience at another institution.

4.2 Termination of Appointment: In the absence of extension, the Postdoc Fellow should assume that his or her appointment will terminate on the termination date set forth in the appointment letter. The Faculty Mentor and Postdoc Fellow are encouraged to hold regular, on-going conversations about the Postdoc Fellow’s transition out of the appointment. The VPR will conduct an exit interview at the conclusion of the Postdoc Fellow’s appointment.

If during the appointment the Postdoc Fellow is found to have violated the expectations detailed in this policy, the University may terminate the appointment prior to the termination date. In such instances, the Faculty Mentor shall consult with the Department Chair, the VPR, and Human Resources. These early terminations will be considered on a case-to-case basis. In the event of early termination, a written dismissal notice shall be issued to the Postdoc Fellow.

In instances where funding support for the appointment ends, the University may terminate a Postdoc Fellow appointment with 60 days written notice from the Faculty Mentor to the Postdoc Fellow. Finally, in instances of resignation, a Postdoc Fellow is expected to provide at least 30 days written notice to the Faculty Mentor.

4.3 Responsibilities at End of Appointment: Regardless of whether a Postdoc Fellow’s appointment ends due to resignation, lack of funding, or dismissal for cause, a Postdoc Fellow has certain responsibilities to meet at the end of appointment. First, it is recommended that the Postdoc Fellow work with his or her Faculty Mentor to submit research results, if any, for publication by the end of appointment, if possible. Second, the Postdoc Fellow must leave all original notes, computerized files, equipment, documents, and any other tangible materials in his or her possession with his or her Faculty Mentor prior to departure. Such materials and information are at all times the property of the University and the University retains the right to own, disclose, and use such materials and information at any time and for any purpose during and after the appointment.

The Postdoc Fellow may copy notes, computerized files, and other research materials that he or she helped generate during the appointment only with prior, written permission to do so from his or her Faculty Mentor and only if such reproduction is
permitted under the terms of any applicable grant agreements or other contracts. Moreover, future use of any such material and information by the Postdoc Fellow is limited by the terms of any applicable grant agreements or other contracts. Any confidential information obtained by the Postdoc Fellow during his or her appointment must remain strictly confidential and may be disclosed only in accordance with federal or state law, University policy, and the terms of any applicable grant agreements or other contracts.

5. **Stipend Level**

   The University has formally adopted the NIH/NRSA guidelines as the minimum salary to be paid to Postdoc Fellows. The NIH/NRSA salary levels, which are adjusted annually, are based on the Postdoc Fellow’s years of research experience prior to the appointment. Should the FLSA dictate a minimum salary threshold for exempt status that is above the NIH/NRSA guidelines, the University shall use the FLSA minimum salary as the minimum salary to be paid to full-time Postdoc Fellows. Departments will be responsible for ensuring each Postdoc Fellow is paid at least the new minimum salary every year.

   For the projected NIH/NRSA guidelines, effective December 1, 2016, please visit the NIH/NRSA website: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-16-134.html

6. **Benefits**

   Boston College provides a broad and competitive range of benefits in order to promote the health and general well-being of its workforce. In addition to comprehensive health and dental insurance plans, the University offers many other benefits, including various types of insurance coverage, family and sick leave policies, tuition remission opportunities, and a generous number of paid holidays and vacation days. The following link (http://www.bc.edu/offices/hr/resources/handbook/hbk-benefits.html) provides in detail the University’s benefits program. Further information is available from the Benefits Office at 129 Lake Street on the Brighton Campus.

7. **Obligations of Postdoctoral Research Fellow**

   Postdoctoral appointments entail a mutually beneficial relationship between the Postdoc Fellow and the Faculty Mentor. This relationship engenders obligations on behalf of both the Postdoc Fellow and the Faculty Mentor. For the Postdoc Fellow, these obligations are to the Faculty Mentor, the laboratory in which he or she is working, the Department with which he or she is associated, the University, and the agency that supports him or her. These obligations include:
   
   ● The conscientious discharge of research responsibilities,
8. **Obligations of Faculty Mentors**

The principal purpose of a Postdoc Fellow appointment is to acquire the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of the Postdoc Fellow’s choosing. During the appointment, the Postdoc Fellow is expected to acquire the professional skills needed to pursue his or her chosen career path. The Faculty Mentor is expected to support and encourage the development of these skills by working with his or her Postdoc Fellow to develop a plan of research and goals for the appointment. Both the Faculty Mentor and the Postdoc Fellow must approve the plan. Other obligations of the Faculty Mentor include:

- Provide adequate work and/or laboratory space and access to resources.
- Hold annual one-on-one meetings that discuss professional development and mentoring.

Other encouraged practices by the Faculty Mentor:

- Encourage Postdoc Fellows to seek secondary mentors who could provide them with opportunities in new areas of research, foster collaboration, and offer them guidance and support to assist with their career goals,
- Seek the participation of these secondary mentors or multiple other faculty members in the annual progress reviews with their Postdoc Fellows,
- Encourage Postdoc Fellows to participate in career development activities (workshops, courses, pre-conference events),
Recognize that because of the temporary nature of the Postdoc Fellow appointment, early encouragement of participation in career development activities is critical,

Encourage Postdoc Fellows to engage in social networking opportunities, such as attendance at talks and seminars in the department or University-wide.

This policy seeks to set out infrastructure that helps the Postdoc Fellow acquire the skills necessary for a career of his or her choosing. It is intended to serve as a resource that protects all parties involved in the appointment. The VPR can be contacted if issues arise that are not addressed by the Policy or need assistance for resolution.
Appendix I: Determining Adjunct Hours of Service

The Internal Revenue Service has outlined two options for universities to determine the number of hours that adjunct faculty work when teaching in order for Universities to be compliant with the Affordable Care Act. Boston College has decided the “safe harbor” option is the most efficient method to calculate the hours needed in teaching a course. The Policy also uses this calculation when determining the teaching hours of Postdoc Fellows. Below is the calculation, which is based upon course credit hours and number of courses taught.

Postdoc Fellows will be credited with (a) 2.25 hours of service (representing a combination of teaching or classroom time and time performing related tasks such as class preparation and grading of examinations or papers) per week for each hour of teaching or classroom time (in other words, in addition to crediting an hour of service for each hour teaching in the classroom, this method would credit an additional 1.25 hours for activities such as class preparation and grading) and, separately, (b) an hour of service per week for each additional hour outside of the classroom the Postdoc Fellow spends performing duties he or she is required to perform (such as required office hours or required attendance at faculty meetings).  

These hours are considered part of the Postdoc Fellow’s 40-hour work week.

Formula: (# of credit hours taught × 2.25) + # of classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th># Of Credits (# )</th>
<th>Classroom/Prep Credit (× 2.25)</th>
<th># of Classes (+)</th>
<th>Total (=)</th>
<th>% of Workweek (÷ 40 × 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Class Examples</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Class Examples*</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.25</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For example, two single credit courses totaling two credits OR one two credit course and one single credit course totaling three credits OR two three credit courses totaling six credits, etc.
Appendix II: Postdoctoral Research Fellow Offer Letter Template

[DATE]

[POSTDOC NAME]
[POSTDOC ADDRESS]

Dear Dr. [POSTDOC NAME],

I am pleased to offer you an appointment as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of [DEPARTMENT]. This letter describes our mutual understanding of your appointment. The effective date of your appointment is [DATE] and you will receive an annual salary of [SALARY]. Your appointment will be funded by [FUNDING SOURCE], which will be guaranteed for [LENGTH OF TIME]. Optional: In addition to your salary, additional funds will be provided for [DESCRIPTION OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR RESEARCH, TRAVEL, MOVING (if allowed), ETC.] This appointment is not to exceed four years and if you have had a prior postdoctoral appointment, your cumulative postdoctoral experience cannot exceed six years.

At Boston College, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow is an individual holding a doctoral degree or equivalent who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training. The principal purpose of this appointment is to acquire the professional skills needed to pursue an independent career path of your choosing. You are an employee of the University and shall work under my direct supervision and mentorship. I will be responsible for supervising your research and providing guidance in your career development.

As a member of the Boston College community, you will be subject to the applicable policies and procedure of the University. Enclosed is a copy of Boston College's Postdoctoral Research Fellow Policy. It is incorporated by reference into this letter and supplements this letter in governing the terms and conditions of your appointment.

During this appointment, you will [DESCRIBE RESEARCH PROJECT, EXPECTATIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES]. Your primary worksite location will be [LOCATION]. Optional: [ADDITIONAL RELEVANT INFORMATION FOR THE APPOINTMENT, SUCH AS RESOURCES, COLLABORATIONS, TEACHING, ETC.] The project may be modified within the objectives of the supporting grant or other funding for the appointment.

You will be eligible for the applicable benefits provided to University employees. The benefits section of the employee handbook details the University's benefits program. Further information is available from the Benefits Office at 129 Lake Street on the Brighton Campus.

This offer is contingent upon evidence of doctoral degree, which must be provided to me. Additionally, you must be authorized for employment in the United States at the time of
November 11, 2016

your start date. Information regarding the hiring process is forthcoming. *If applicable:* You must maintain the appropriate immigration status necessary for this appointment. Please work with [DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATOR], the department administrator, at [E-MAIL AND/OR PHONE] and the Office of International Students and Scholars to obtain the appropriate authorization.

If you have an understanding of the appointment that differs from what is presented here, do not sign this letter and discuss your concerns with me. If you accept the offer as described in this agreement, please sign and return one copy of this letter to [PI/DEPARTMENT ADMIN] by [DATE]. Enclosed is a second copy for your records.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[FACULTY MENTOR’S NAME]
[TITLE]
[DEPARTMENT]

Enclosure: Postdoctoral Research Fellow Policy

cc

Approved

______________________________________
[DEPARTMENT CHAIR] Date

______________________________________
[VPR OFFICE] Date

______________________________________
[If applicable VPR FACULTIES] Date

I, [POSTDOC NAME], accept the appointment as described in this letter.

______________________________________
[POSTDOC NAME] Date