

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 Section 3.2 for further information on part-time appointments. The appointment shall be temporary.

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: In most cases, job advertisements for postdoctoral fellowship positions will be posted through Human Resources at Boston College. However, individuals interested in a Postdoc Fellow appointment may also directly contact the Faculty Mentor and the appropriate academic department in which the candidate is seeking the appointment to see if the Faculty Mentor anticipates being able to hire a Postdoc Fellow in the future. During the interview process, 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 the decision to appoint a Postdoc Fellow, the Faculty Mentor will create an offer letter using the template approved by the VPR and Human Resources (HR). 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 VPR and HR. The VPR must approve the final offer if the Postdoc Fellow is to receive either grant or start-up funds. The VPR will copy the departmental administrator when sending the letter to HR. 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 HR officer will then send the offer letter to the Postdoc Fellow.

The Postdoc Fellow appointee must acknowledge the terms of the appointment with the HR officer, who will notify the department, the faculty mentor, and the VPR of the acknowledgment. A copy of the final letter will be sent to the department, faculty mentor, and the VPR.

3. Terms of Appointment

3.1 Full-Time Appointments: Professional/administrative staff work on a full-time basis (35 hours/week). As a professional/administrative employee, additional hours may be necessary to fulfill the requirements of the job. 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.

In addition to research and scholarship responsibilities, appointments may also include teaching responsibilities. See Appendix II for the Affordable Care Act's guidelines on calculating teaching hours.

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 period set forth in the offer letter, the appointment may be eligible for extension based on satisfactory performance, the existence of funding, programmatic need, and continuing visa eligibility (for international scholars). The Faculty Mentor and Postdoc Fellow may agree to extend the Postdoc Fellow appointment beyond the term defined in the initial offer letter. However, the appointment is not to exceed four years, unless an extension is granted. In the case of an extension beyond four years, the Faculty Mentor shall submit a written request for approval to the VPR 60 days prior to the end

of the appointment. Appointments may be extended on a yearly basis and will be reviewed annually by the VPR, up to six years total. In exceptional cases, the appointment may be extended beyond the six-year limit, which is inclusive of postdoctoral experience at another institution. The Faculty Mentor and Postdoc Fellow are encouraged to hold regular, on-going conversations about the Postdoc Fellow's transition out of the appointment.

4.2 Termination of Appointment: The appointment may be terminated by mutual agreement between the Postdoc Fellow and Faculty Mentor, when the Postdoc Fellow is found to have violated the expectations detailed in the policy, or when funding support for the appointment ends.

If during the appointment the Postdoc Fellow is found to have violated the expectations detailed in this policy, the University may terminate the appointment. 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.

The VPR will conduct an exit interview at the conclusion of the Postdoc Fellow's appointment.

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 for the current fiscal year, please visit the NIH website:

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-23-076.html> Please note that NIH/NRSA salary minimums are subject to change.

Below is a table showing the minimum salaries for each year of experience based on the FY 2023 notice from NIH:

Years Experience	Minimum Salary
0	\$ 56,484
1	\$ 56,880
2	\$ 57,300
3	\$ 59,592
4	\$ 61,572
5	\$ 63,852
6	\$ 66,228
7 or more	\$68,604

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,
- Conformance to ethical standards of research,
- Compliance with good laboratory practice,
- Maintenance of laboratory notebook(s) and/or other records of research activity,
- Adherence to University standards and policies regarding safety and good laboratory practices, human and animal subjects protections, conflict of interest, research misconduct, and the like,
- Open and timely discussion with the Faculty Mentor regarding all facets of the Postdoc Fellow's research activities,
- Prompt disclosure to the Faculty Mentor regarding the possession and desire to distribute materials, reagents, software, copyrightable and potentially patentable discoveries derived from the Postdoc Fellow's research,
- Collegial conduct towards members of the research laboratory and others,
- Compliance with all applicable University policies and applicable terms of any sponsored agreement which provides support for the Postdoc Fellow, and
- Completion of the Research and Scholarship Integrity program within the first two years of the Postdoc Fellow's appointment.

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 the activities of the Boston College Postdoctoral Association, who sponsor professional development seminars and social networking opportunities, as well as other departmental and University-wide opportunities. Additional information about the BCPDA and their activities can be found at <https://www.bc.edu/research/vpr/bcpda.html>.

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.

For Postdoc Fellows, the time needed for teaching is considered part of the 40-hour work week. Their other responsibilities should be adjusted accordingly to accommodate the calculated hours needed for their teaching responsibilities. 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).¹

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

Examples

	# Of Credits (#)	Classroom/Prep Credit (\times 2.25)	# of Classes (+)	Total (=)	% of Workweek (\div 40 \times 100)
Single Class Examples	1	2.25	1	3.25	8%
	2	4.5	1	5.5	14%
	3	6.75	1	7.75	19%

¹The explanation and examples can be found in the letter from the American Association of Community Colleges. "IRS Releases Final Rule Concerning Treatment of Adjunct Faculty Under Affordable Care Act – Mostly Good News for Community Colleges." February 21, 2014. Accessed August 8, 2018. http://cft.org/images/Campus_Equity_Week/Adjuncts_and_the_Affordable_Healthcare_Act_IRS.pdf.

Single Class Examples	# Of Credits (#)	Classroom/Prep Credit (× 2.25)	# of Classes (+)	Total (=)	% of Workweek (÷ 40 × 100)
	4	9	1	10	25%
Multiple Class Examples*	2	4.5	2	6.5	16%
	3	6.75	2	8.75	22%
	3	6.75	3	9.75	24%
	4	9	3	11	28%
	6	13.5	2	15.5	39%
	9	20.25	3	23.25	58%

*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 Associate Teaching Policy

Some postdocs may wish to teach in order to gain more teaching experience as they prepare for a job in academia. This policy describes how postdocs may be paid for teaching courses. This policy applies to courses taught at any time of day, whether before 4 p.m. or in the evenings.

These teaching appointments are temporary and part time. Postdoc teaching appointments require approval and cooperation from two entities. First, the PI must approve the postdoc's teaching role, in accordance with the needs of the postdoc role. Second, a teaching position must be offered and approved by the department chair in the department staffing the course. Teaching positions are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of courses in each department.

This policy applies *only* to postdocs, not to other lab staff. Postdocs are limited to teaching no more than one course per semester. The pay for supplemental teaching positions is provided by the University, not by the grant which funds the postdoc.

Internally Funded Postdocs

In situations where the postdoc is not grant funded, but is instead funded on start-up or university funds, the postdoc must still get permission from their PI to teach and arrange to make up all hours for their full-time research role. In these cases, they may be paid as a supplement for the teaching position. This applies to courses taught during the day and evening. Some internally funded postdocs may also have teaching as part of their agreed-upon job responsibilities, in which case they are not paid as a supplement.

Grant Funded Postdocs - Teaching for Supplemental Pay while Maintaining 100% Effort on Grant

Some PIs and postdocs may wish for the postdoc to maintain 100% effort on their grant while teaching for supplemental pay. When a course is available to be taught, the PI and postdoc must agree on a plan for the postdoc to make up his or her full-time hours outside of normal working hours. The teaching role is then paid as a supplemental, secondary appointment, not from faculty supervisor's funds. Pay for this job is not included in the postdoc's Institutional Base Salary calculation.

Grant Funded Postdocs - Reducing Effort on Grant in Order to Teach

Some PIs and postdocs may wish for the postdoc to reduce his or her effort on a grant to allow time and flexibility to teach. Other postdoctoral positions may include teaching as part of the training plan. In these situations, the postdoc's effort on the grant should be reduced in accordance with the recommendations in Appendix I of the postdoc policy ("Determining Adjunct Hours of Service.")