

## POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM AND POLICIES

Postdoctoral scholars pursue advanced educational experiences to enhance their preparation for academic and/or research careers. These scholars provide major contributions to the research and scholarly missions of the University. The policies and program outlined below are designed to enhance and promote the postdoctoral experience as recommended by the Committee on Postdoctoral Education of the Association of American Universities<sup>1</sup> and the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy of the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the Institute of Medicine<sup>2</sup>.

### **Definition of a Postdoctoral Appointment:**

- The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career and is not part of a clinical training program;
- The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship;
- The appointment is never permanent, and the total postdoctoral experience allowed by the University of Tennessee, including all such appointments both internal and external to the University, may not exceed 6 years;
- The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate in an appropriate field or is a more senior doctorate-holding individual pursuing a career change;
- The appointee is supervised by a faculty member (a faculty member as defined in the Faculty Handbook);
- The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship obtained during the period of the appointment.

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<sup>1</sup> *Report and Recommendation*, Committee on Postdoctoral Education, Association of American Universities, March 31, 1998, [www.aau.edu/reports/PostdocRpt.html](http://www.aau.edu/reports/PostdocRpt.html) .

<sup>2</sup> *Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies*, Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 2000, [www.nap.edu/books/0309069963/html/](http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069963/html/) .

### **Postdoctoral Appointments:**

The postdoctoral program at UT promotes timely progression of postdoctoral scholars preparing for full-time academic and/or research careers. Two different types of appointments are available, postdoctoral trainees and postdoctoral associates. **The trainee appointment is available only for University-approved postdoctoral training programs.** The postdoctoral trainee is appointed full-time to conduct research or scholarship under the supervision of a faculty mentor. The duration and terms of the appointment are dependent on the program and funding.

**Postdoctoral and senior postdoctoral associates** are exempt professional staff employees with full benefits. The duration of the appointment for either associate level is dependent on funding and work performance and may not exceed 3 years. The **postdoctoral associate** appointment is intended to provide experience necessary for progression to a more senior postdoctoral position or more permanent employment. The appointee works under the supervision of a faculty mentor and may have responsibilities for supervision and instruction of students and staff. When appropriate, the associate may apply for research grants and contracts that are underwritten by the mentor and approved by the Department Head.

The **senior postdoctoral associate** has substantial prior postdoctoral experience at UT or elsewhere. The senior postdoctoral associate may also be a more senior scholar seeking a postdoctoral experience that will promote a career or field change. This appointment is intended to be the final postdoctoral experience for transition to more permanent employment. The appointee works under a faculty mentor and is expected to have the capacity for independent and collaborative work. The senior associate, like the associate, may have responsibilities for supervision and instruction of students and staff and, when appropriate, may apply for research grants and contracts that are underwritten by the mentor and approved by the Department Head.

### **Appointment Review and Termination:**

The appointee must hold a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree or provide a letter from the degree-granting institution that all requirements for the degree have been completed prior to the initial appointment.

Recruitment of postdoctoral scholars may include advertisement through mechanisms appropriate to each field; however, in recognition of the special needs of externally funded investigators and the limited duration of postdoctoral appointments, an alternative procedure is provided that permits recruitment and hiring of postdoctoral scholars without advertisement or search.

Offer letters to postdoctoral scholars are required and must state the conditions of the appointment including the scholar's responsibilities, appointment duration, contingency of appointment on availability of funds, starting salary and benefits. Offer letters must be

approved by the faculty mentor, the Department Head, and the Dean of the respective college. Copies of all offer letters must be maintained in department and college personnel files and forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School.

The faculty mentor states in writing his/her expectations when the offer is extended. Rights to authorship of publishable work, intellectual properties, and project areas developed by the postdoctoral scholar must be addressed in the statement of expectations. Copies of mentor statements are maintained in the department and college personnel files and forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Discussions of mentor expectations and postdoctoral scholar rights should continue throughout the appointment as the faculty mentor oversees the educational and training experience of the postdoctoral scholar. The faculty mentor provides to the postdoctoral scholar each year a written evaluation of his/her performance and development, and copies of the evaluation are forwarded to the Department Head and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Minimum salaries for new postdoctoral appointments are determined at departmental and college levels. Minimum salary levels are market-based and comply with guidelines of appropriate sponsoring agencies. Departments and programs must review their recommended minimal salary levels at least every 2 years to determine if they remain appropriate.

Terminations of all postdoctoral appointments, including postdoctoral training appointments, must follow policies and procedures currently in place for all UT employees.

### **Responsibilities of the Faculty Mentor and Administration:**

The relationship between the postdoctoral scholar and the faculty mentor is critical in the postdoctoral experience. The mentor, in most cases, is responsible for obtaining the financial resources required for the scholar's compensation package and for providing a working environment that promotes and enhances the scholar's professional development. The mentor is expected to insure the scholar complies with all applicable policies and guidelines for responsible and ethical conduct of research and for regulatory compliance. The faculty mentor provides annual performance evaluations and is expected to assume primary responsibility for career advising and assistance in job placement.

The Department Head and Training Program Director have direct responsibility for insuring that the qualifications of both the mentor and scholar are appropriate as defined in this document. In addition, the Head or Director insures the working environment, compensation, and resources provided for the postdoctoral scholar are adequate and meet established guidelines for the Department or Program. The Head or Director approves the initial appointment, requests for changes of appointment, and grant or contract proposals by postdoctoral scholars. The Head or Director has responsibilities for

monitoring professional development of postdoctoral appointees and for providing mediation services at the department or program level for grievances and conflicts.

The Dean of the Graduate School is the central administrative officer with oversight responsibilities for postdoctoral affairs. The Dean has the primary responsibility to assure consistent application of postdoctoral policies across the institution. The Dean reviews postdoctoral appointments and evaluations and provides final approval of requests for appointment extensions. In addition, the Dean provides mediation services for grievances and conflicts that cannot be resolved at the local level. The Dean has oversight responsibilities for postdoctoral training programs and is responsible for the approval of new programs and the review and recommendations for continuance or closure of existing programs.

### **Postdoctoral Training Programs:**

Postdoctoral training programs provide specialized training in areas deemed critical by the University and funding agencies. A trainee participates in an intensive educational and training experience preparing him/her for a career in a specific academic/research area including more advanced postdoctoral experience. Trainee appointments are typically intended for scholars who have been recently awarded doctorates, but exceptions may be made for more senior scholars seeking specific training offered through a particular program.

Benefits provided to trainees are limited but must include the following:

- Paid comprehensive health plan for the trainee and dependents
- Tuition when appropriate
- All University holidays
- Personal days to be used for paid absences including illness
- Professional development funds.

When appropriate, programs may add additional benefits. Minimum realistic personal days are determined by the program but must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Absences exceeding allotted personal days per appointment year may be granted under certain circumstances with approval by the faculty mentor, the Training Program Director, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Professional development funds are provided by the mentor and/or the program and may be used for all appropriate expenditures including professional travel. External funding agencies may impose additional requirements.

Postdoctoral training programs may be funded by external granting agencies or may be funded internally when proposed by departments, colleges, or interdisciplinary groups. Proposals for both external and internal training programs must be approved by the respective Department Heads and College Deans. The Dean of the Graduate School determines the review processes required for initial institutional approval, continuance, and termination of internal training programs. Proposals for internal training programs must address the following points:

- The objectives of the program and the benefits to the trainees and the University
- Benefits and stipend/salary scale
- Program administration and responsibilities
- Program faculty and responsibilities
- Recruitment and committee approval of trainee candidates
- Assurance of proper conduct of research and compliance with regulatory standards and University policies
- Program-specific training including seminars and colloquia
- Professional development including English language training for appropriate international trainees, scientific writing, proposal preparation, career advising, and professional development funds
- Evaluation of trainees and mentors
- Grievance and conflict mediation
- Termination of appointments