

Postdoc Handbook 2020-21

Office of Postdoctoral Programs

The Office of Postdoctoral Program (OPP) is housed in the Graduate School. The goal of the Office of Postdoctoral Programs is to monitor the status and needs of the postdoctoral campus community and serve as an advocate for postdoctoral issues to OSU's central administration.

What is a postdoc?

A postdoc is a person who has received a doctoral degree and who is pursuing additional research and training in order to have better skills to pursue a career in academia, research, or any other field. Postdocs work closely with a faculty mentor, typically for a defined period of time. Postdocs play a crucial role in the university; they supplement the research expertise of faculty by sharing new techniques, collaborating with other institutions, and helping to manage the daily operations of a laboratory or research site. At times, they also contribute to instruction and academic support for undergraduate and graduate students.

Research Associate (Postdoc)

Research Associates (Postdoc) provide support for faculty research programs and are supervised by professorial faculty members. This is a position of indefinite length. The [Office of Human Resources](#) establishes policies and provides information about these positions. This employment classification will not be utilized after September 2021.

Postdoctoral Scholar

A Postdoctoral Scholar is a mentored position restricted to individuals who were awarded a Ph.D (or comparable advanced degrees) within five years. The postdoc scholar position has a three year maximum term at OSU. Postdoctoral Scholars are mentored by professorial faculty. At least 15% of the postdoc scholar's time must be devoted to professional development activities outside of their research training activities. An [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#), co-developed by the mentor and the Postdoctoral Scholar, defines the scope, goals, and expectations of the postdoc experience. One key measure of success for a postdoctoral trainee position is subsequent employment as a fully independent researcher.

Postdoctoral/Clinical Fellow

Postdoc fellows have been independently awarded a fellowship by a federal or private agency. This generally means that the fellow has applied to (on their own), and secured funding from, an external funding agency. These are short-term research appointments (typically two to three years) under supervision of an OSU faculty member. Postdoctoral fellows are not considered OSU employees as they are not paid by the university. The [Office for Sponsored Research and Award Administration](#) manages the financial aspects of these positions and the Office of Postdoctoral Programs provides professional guidance and training opportunities.

Individual Development Plan and Annual Report

At Oregon State University, mentors are expected to work with all new Postdoctoral Scholars to establish an Individual Development Plan (IDP), **and this document must be submitted to the Office of**

Postdoctoral Programs for approval before the end of the third month of hire. The IDP serves as a communication tool between postdoc and mentor(s), and provides a plan that identifies both mentor and mentee responsibilities and expectations, professional development needs, and career goals. Two reports (the [NIH Biomedical Research Workforce Report](#) and the [NIGMS Strategic Plan](#)) have brought renewed attention to the value of career planning for scientists. IDPs are a particularly useful tool for assisting in the career development of science PhDs. In response, an interactive, web-based tool ([myIDP](#)) was launched in September 2012 to help postdocs set long-term and short-term career goals. If it is in alignment with the postdoc scholar's IDP, it is possible for postdoc scholars to take courses at OSU to acquire skills and expertise in areas beyond that of the immediate research topic. This includes the 18-credit [Graduate Certificate in College and University Teaching \(GCCUT\)](#). Postdoc scholars are eligible for a tuition benefit. Please consult with the Office of Human Resources, if you are interested. The tuition reduction benefit is not available to postdoc fellows.

How to create an IDP

A good IDP is not a one size fits all document; it needs to be tailored to the specific aptitudes and goals of the postdoc as well as the laboratory and project that is funding the postdoctoral opportunity. Mentors and postdocs should plan on devoting significant time to a collaborative effort to produce the IDP. The OPP recommends following these steps:

1. The Mentor(s) and the postdoctoral Scholar should become familiar with the Postdoctoral Core Competencies (see below). The postdoc should complete a self-assessment of skills, experiences, goals and interests using the [Competency Checklist](#).

Core Competencies

Oregon State University endorses the six core competencies for postdoctoral scholars and fellows established by the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA). As noted by the NPA, in an era of increasing complexity for the research enterprise, postdoctoral scholars and fellows pursue professional opportunities not only in academia, but also in industry, government, nonprofits and entrepreneurship. These six core competencies offer a framework for defining specific professional development needs for individuals based on their personal goals, aptitudes and prior experience.

Download the complete NPA [Core Competencies Document](#).

2. The postdoc should then write a first draft of the *career goals* and *research activities* sections in the IDP template and make an initial attempt to fill out the objectives, activities, and postdoc responsibility sections of the IDP template. It is important to note that these objectives should be oriented to the professional development of the postdoc to meet career goals.
3. The mentor(s) and postdoc should meet in person to go over the postdoc's initial contributions to the IDP. At the same time, the mentor(s) should share their expectations for how the postdoc will be trained in laboratory and/or project that is funding the postdoctoral opportunity. Pay particular attention to the *Data Access and Publication Agreement* section. During this meeting or in a subsequent meeting, they should complete the IDP template.

4. The IDP should be signed and dated by the mentor(s) and the postdoc and sent as either as a hard copy via campus mail or as an email attachment to postdoctoral.programs@oregonstate.edu The OPP will review and approve the IDP.

The Annual Report

Before the end of the first and second years of the postdoctoral appointment, the mentor(s) and postdoc should meet in person again for an annual review based on the IDP using the [Annual Progress Report Template](#) with particular attention to accomplishments, areas that still need attention, and responsibilities by both parties to address the needs. A written version of the evaluation should be prepared by the mentor(s), signed and dated by the mentor(s) and postdoc, and sent to postdoctoral.programs@oregonstate.edu. If appropriate, the IDP may also be revised at this time, and updates should be included in the report. **The annual report must be approved by OPP prior to reappointment.**

Stipends for Postdoc Scholars

Stipends for postdoctoral scholars are governed by a policy adopted on January 28, 2014 that requires stipends to be no lower than those set by the National Institutes of Health for their NRSA fellows. The minimum rate for postdoctoral scholars **with no prior postdoctoral experience** in FY 2020 is \$52,704/year with annual increments for each year of service. Postdocs and their mentors can negotiate stipends above this minimum level. For more information, see the [NIH](#) web site.

Career Level	Years of Experience	Stipend for FY 2020	Monthly Stipend
Postdoctoral	0	\$52,704	\$4,392
	1	\$53,076	\$4,423
	2	\$53,460	\$4,455
	3	\$55,596	\$4,633
	4	\$57,456	\$4,788
	5	\$59,580	\$4,965
	6	\$61,800	\$5,150
	7 or More	\$64,008	\$5,334

In order to hire international scholars, some visa classifications require that the scholar be paid the prevailing wage for such employees. Compliance with this standard is required for certain visas to be issued. Before offering a postdoctoral appointment, contact [Office of International Services](#) to determine the appropriate visa type. Compensation for postdoctoral fellows is governed by the agency providing funding, and therefore varies based on the source of funds.

National Postdoctoral Association

The [National Postdoctoral Association](#) (NPA) was formed to assist postdocs, postdoc mentors, and administrators. The NPA provides useful information on a wide variety of topics. Because Oregon State University is a sustaining member of the NPA, OSU faculty, staff, and postdocs at Oregon State University may apply for free affiliate membership. Information on membership is available on their web page. Once you navigate to the web page, choose the membership link.

The NPA web site is divided into sections for faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and supporters. The NPA has a diversity officer who develops special programs to address diversity issues. An explanation and a link to the diversity officer can be found by choosing the [diversity](#) tab on the NPA web page. The NPA also has international officers. Learn more about them by choosing the [international issues](#) tab. International postdocs may be especially interested in the [International Postdoc Survival Guide](#). Although some content can be viewed by anyone, OSU faculty, staff, and postdocs are encouraged to apply for affiliate membership.

Oregon State Postdoctoral Association

The Oregon State Postdoctoral Association (OPA) was formed to create a community of postdocs at OSU. OPA brings postdocs together for events throughout the year including networking opportunities, annual picnics, professional development events, mentoring opportunities and more. OPA also provides awards and funding opportunities for OSU's postdocs. We encourage all postdocs to interact with OPA and make the most of the opportunities available on our campus. Please visit the [OPA](#) website to learn more

United Academics of Oregon State University

United Academics of Oregon State University (UAOSU) is the faculty union at OSU. Postdocs are part of this organization. The [current contract](#) was ratified on June 15, 2020 and extends through June 30, 2024. You may connect with UAOSU on their [website](#).

Benefits for Postdocs at OSU

For information regarding benefits (i.e., vacation time, sick leave, family medical leave, tuition), postdocs can [contact the Office of Human Resources](#).

Optional Retirement Plan under SB 214

The SB 214 bill exempts Postdoctoral Scholars from the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) and creates an alternative retirement plan within the [Optional Retirement Plan](#) (ORP). This alternative retirement plan may allow Postdoctoral Scholars to receive up to a 4% university match on voluntary retirement contributions made to a tax-deferred investment (TDI) (403b) program. Please work with a [Retirement Officer](#) if you are interested.

Professional Development for Postdocs

Postdocs should visit with their mentors and others in their workplace to learn about relevant professional organizations. Professional organizations, often organized around academic disciplines or research interests, sponsor journals of special interest to scientists and hold meetings that provide opportunities for scientists to present talks and poster sessions. These networking opportunities enrich

the research experience, enhance research skills, and provide information about jobs that are available upon the completion of the postdoc training period.

Oregon State University's Resources

Your mentor can help you identify research resources that support your work. In addition, several resources on the OSU campus are available to support faculty, postdocs, and students. Three examples are:

- The [Valley Library](#) provides a wide variety of resources. Visit its web site, stop by the library, and ask your mentor which of the resources best support your training activities. For example, you may find some of the [workshops offered to enrich your research activities](#).
- The [Writing Center](#) offers free help with any writing task at any stage of the writing process and is open to all OSU students, as well as to staff, faculty, and members of the Corvallis community. Writing assistants can help with all aspects of the writing process from brainstorming and organization, to questions of grammar and usage. Postdocs should visit with their mentors to determine whether assistance in writing skills might enhance their research training experience.
- The [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) supports Oregon State University faculty, graduate teaching assistants, departments and colleges achieve excellence in teaching and learning. Although most postdoc training focuses on research activity, some postdocs may participate in instruction. Ask your mentor whether your training plan is expected to include any instruction.
- OSU offers professional development opportunities for all employees through a central [registration site](#). You will find a variety of courses provided by human resources, faculty affairs, business affairs, equal opportunity and access, administrative computing, risk management, central web services and more.
- Depending upon type of work you perform, you may also need to complete training for OSU data systems. You may find more information on these trainings [here](#).
- [Graduate Certificate in College and University Teaching \(GCCUT\)](#) offers a unique educational experience for individuals who want to work with adults in education contexts. Students in GCCUT explore how adults learn, develop and deliver engaging learning experiences, and participate in active reflection related to their work.

Online Mentoring Resources

Many online resources are now available relating to mentoring. Below are a few examples:

- National Academy of Sciences Report, "[Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies](#)," 2000. (available to read free online)
- "[Learning to Mentor](#)," by Virginia Gewin, on naturejobs.com
- The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) [Individual Development Plan for Postdoctoral Fellows](#).
- [HHMI Lab Management](#) which includes a pdf entitled [Entering Mentoring](#).
- [Guidelines for Mentoring Postdocs](#) by the University of California, San Francisco.
- [Mentoring Standards](#) prepared by the Gladstone Institutes, based largely on guidelines set by the NIH.
- [Resources for the Development of Early-Career Scientists](#).

- [Mentoring and PI Productivity](#), which is a Science magazine article that explains why mentoring isn't just for the benefit of the postdoc: "Excellent mentoring attracts excellent postdocs, and postdoc alumni in good careers...make a lab look good."
- [A Pinch of This, a Dash of That--Ingredients for Good Mentoring](#), which is another Science article on the qualities of a good mentor.
- [Advisor, Teacher, Role Model, Friend: On Being a Mentor to Students in Science and Engineering](#): A report by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine.

Research Office

OSU's Research Office is dedicated to supporting research across the University. The Office of Sponsored Programs and Award Administration (OSRAA), within the Research Office, manages the financial aspects of Postdoctoral Fellow appointments.

Responsible Conduct of Research

The Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Program at Oregon State University has been designed to meet the requirements outlined in Section 7009 of the America COMPETES Act, which mandates training in the responsible conduct of research. As a recipient of National Science Foundation (NSF) funding, OSU's RCR [plan](#) is designed to make available programs and materials that will increase the knowledge of and facilitate the practice of responsible research. This effort is undertaken in cooperation with other offices at OSU, including the Office for Sponsored Research and Award Administration and the Graduate School. You may learn more about research office trainings and requirements [here](#).

Teaching

Postdocs at OSU do not typically teach as they are primarily engaged in research. Although, some postdocs have used their professional development time to speak or engage in OSU courses as a guest speaker. There are some exceptions to this guideline, please contact your mentor and the OPP for guidance.

Postdoctoral Excellence Award

[The Postdoctoral Excellence Awards](#) (PEA) is granted to two exceptional postdoctoral scholars, fellows or research associates for their exceptional contributions to their research field, OSU and the greater postdoctoral community. The award includes a \$1,000 cash award and a plaque of recognition given to the postdoc, typically on University Day. The nomination is typically due in early April.

Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentoring Award

[The Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentoring Award](#) was established to recognize and encourage outstanding mentoring of postdoctoral appointees by OSU Faculty members. Recipients will have direct and significant impact and involvement with postdocs, outstanding commitment and effectiveness as a mentor of postdocs, been innovative in mentoring, and have demonstrated unusual effort to provide consistent mentoring of postdocs during the course of their careers at OSU. The recipient receives a framed certificate and funding in the amount of \$2,000, to be transferred to a department fund for use by the faculty awardee.