

Full Policy Text

At Georgia State University (GSU), the postdoctoral research experience emphasizes scholarship and continued research training for individuals who have recently completed a doctoral degree. The postdoctoral research scholar conducts research under the general oversight of a faculty mentor in preparation for a career position in academe, industry, government, or the nonprofit sector. Postdoctoral research work provides essential training that may include opportunities to enhance teaching and other professional skills.

Postdoctoral research scholars contribute to the academic community by enhancing the research and education programs of the university. They bring expertise and creativity that enrich the research environment for all members of the university community, including graduate and undergraduate students. The university strives to provide a stimulating, positive, and constructive experience for the postdoctoral research scholar, by emphasizing the mutual commitment and responsibility of the institution, the faculty, and the postdoctoral research scholar.

This policy defines terms and conditions related to postdoctoral research appointments at Georgia State University. Additionally, postdoctoral research appointees are subject to all other applicable GSU and University System of Georgia (USG) policies and procedures. Exceptions to this policy are expected to be rare and granted only in cases with strong justification. Requests for exceptions must be approved by the department chair, dean, and Associate Vice President for Research (AVP). AVP is responsible for administering the postdoctoral research appointee policy, periodically reviewing the policy for revisions as needed, and taking active steps to encourage compliance with the policy.

This policy and related procedures are effective immediately for new appointees and by January 1, 2011 for existing appointees.

Definition

The definition of postdoctoral research appointee used by GSU includes the following criteria:

- The appointee has received a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.V.M., Sc.D., M.D.), usually recently, in a field directly related to the postdoctoral research appointee's assigned responsibilities; and
- the assigned responsibilities of the appointee are substantially research and/or scholarship; and
- the appointment is time-limited; and
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career.

GSU has three categories of postdoctoral research appointees, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct. The latter two positions are restricted to those associates funded by sponsored awards that have terms and conditions that are consistent with the definitions of these awards (e.g.,

if the award specifies the appointee is paid a stipend with no fringe benefits then the postdoctoral appointee is a fellow, if the funds are paid directly to the fellow for postdoctoral training then the appointee is a fellow-adjunct). Only those awards whose terms and conditions are consistent with the definitions of a fellow can be appointed as a postdoctoral fellow.

Postdoctoral Research Associates are considered employees of the University, receiving a salary for required services. While they are also in training as they perform work on a research project, this training is secondary to their primary role as an employee. This enables the University to provide essential services and benefits, including employee health insurance, workman's compensation, and other benefits.

Postdoctoral Research Fellows primarily have educational or training status. They are paid a *stipend* for which no service is required and therefore no taxes are withheld nor is the individual entitled to fringe benefits. The stipend is administered by GSU and is funded by a sponsored award (e.g., a NRSA postdoctoral fellowship training grant is awarded to GSURF and administered by GSU). Fellows will also have access to GSU-related services (e.g., parking, library, recreational services, computer and email access, group health insurance benefits available to graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows, workman's compensation etc.)

Postdoctoral Research Fellows-Adjunct primarily has educational or training status. They are paid a stipend for which no service is required and therefore no taxes are withheld. The stipend is paid *directly* to the recipient by the external agency. He or she is appointed as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow-Adjunct for the purposes of providing GSU-related services (e.g., access to parking, library, recreational services, computer and email access, group health insurance benefits available to graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows, but not workman's compensation etc.)

In this document, the term "postdoctoral research appointee" applies to both Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Research Fellows. A summary table comparing the details of each appointment type is provided at the end of this document.

Expectations

Postdoctoral research appointee

The University has adopted the following set of performance expectations of postdoctoral research appointees:

1. conscientious discharge of assigned duties;
2. adherence to ethical standards, which, prior to assuming duties, includes a background investigation;
3. compliance with good laboratory practices and recognized university standards;
4. open and timely discussion with the mentor regarding research progress, distribution of reagents or materials, or any disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications;

5. collegial conduct toward coworkers;
6. publication of research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor; and
7. compliance with all sponsor, GSU, and USG policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, observation of established guidelines for research involving biohazards, human subjects, or animals, as well as GSU's Policy on the Responsible Conduct of Research Training.

Mentor

The postdoctoral research appointee should be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member in the unit to which the postdoctoral research appointee is assigned. Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the work and advanced training of postdoctoral research appointees. In that role, at the time employment or training begins, faculty mentors should provide the postdoctoral research scholar with a written description of assigned duties and expectations together with a description of the goals and objectives of the training program. Faculty mentors should regularly and frequently communicate with postdoctoral research appointees, provide regular and timely assessments of performance at least annually, and provide career advice and job placement assistance. Faculty mentors are expected to supervise Responsible Conduct of Research Training.

Postdoctoral Research Associates must follow all GSU employment procedures which include completing payroll and benefits forms (as detailed on the GSU Human Resources web site)

Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Postdoctoral Research Fellows-Adjunct will be entered into GSU's system with \$0 compensation via the payroll system and a record made of the stipend to be paid.

Postdoctoral Research Associates may participate in GSU employee health insurance, whereas Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Adjuncts are not considered employees and may acquire their own private health insurance or may choose to participate in the group health insurance plan offered to GSU graduate students. In many cases, fellowship stipends or accompanying allowance payments are expected to be used to secure health insurance. Appointees must follow the terms and conditions of their award.

Check the summary table comparing details of appointment types provided at the end of this policy.

This policy does not cover postdoctoral appointees who are involved in clinical, rather than research, training (e.g., at the counseling center).

Term of Appointment

The maximum term of appointment for a postdoctoral research appointee at this institution is seven years. This limit is based on federal guidelines and the tenet that postdoctoral research appointments are primarily for training, which has a natural duration. The term refers to the total time spent at GSU as a postdoctoral research appointee and does not include time spent at the University as an undergraduate or graduate student or as a postdoctoral research appointee at other institutions. The seven-year term limit may be interrupted for extended medical or family leaves. Exceptions to the seven-year term limit will be considered by AVP; these are expected to be rare and will be approved only in cases with strong justification based on the need to complete additional training, not to complete additional work.

Appointing units should ensure that postdoctoral research appointees do not exceed the seven-year term limit. AVP periodically will review postdoctoral research appointments to ensure compliance. If the maximum term of appointment is reached, a postdoctoral research appointee must be moved into an established position or separated with a minimum ninety days notice. Established positions appropriate after a seven-year postdoctoral research appointment include:

- Research Scientist I
- Research Scientist II
- Research Scientist Senior

A postdoctoral research appointee may be terminated prior to the seven year term limit with a minimum:

- Ninety days notice if the funding supporting a Postdoctoral research Associate ends;
- Two weeks notice for failure to adhere to the expectations described above;
- No notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated (including those detailed in Federal, Georgia State University, or Board of Regents policy).

Note that any change in funding supporting postdoctoral research appointees should be communicated to the appointee as soon as possible. If a postdoctoral research appointee holds a GSU visa sponsorship, the GSU Office of International Education must be contacted prior to informing the scholar of termination.

Evaluation

Recognizing that Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Research Fellows are in growth positions and striving for professional advancement, they are entitled to formal evaluations by their faculty mentors and this process is strongly encouraged by the University. In accordance with University policy, evaluations should occur on at least an annual basis, with an effort to link evaluations to annual stipend or salary raises when feasible based on funding. Written evaluations, appropriately customized for the

context, are strongly encouraged so that these form the basis of continuing conversations and future evaluations.

Compensation

Compensation for postdoctoral research appointees at Georgia State University should reflect their advanced training and degree. The University suggests a minimum annual starting salary of \$30,000 FTE (applicable FY2010), with reasonable annual increases consistent with typical employee raises as well as the realities of grant funding. AVP will periodically reassess the minimum compensation in consultation with appropriate groups.

For Postdoctoral Research Fellows, the terms of the award will dictate stipend amount and any increases; these are outside the jurisdiction of Georgia State University.

Leave

Postdoctoral Research Associates are eligible for 10 hours per month of paid annual leave and 8 hours per month of sick leave. There is no provision for leave payout upon separation. Leave for Postdoctoral Research Fellows are determined by the terms and conditions of their award.

Retirement Program

Postdoctoral Research Associates have the option of participating either in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia or an Optional Retirement Plan. More information is available on the HR website. There is no retirement program for fellows.

Grievance

Postdoctoral research appointees have access to the same grievance policy as regular employees.

Rationale or Purpose

Postdoctoral fellows play an important role in the research function of the University. This policy clarifies the terms and conditions of their appointments, as well as the procedures for appointing different types of fellows.

Definitions {if needed}

None

Additional Information or Resources {optional}

BOR Policy Manual (<http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/>)

Summary Table of Postdoctoral Research Position Details

	Postdoctoral Research Associate	Postdoctoral Research Fellow	Postdoctoral Research Fellow Adjunct
Term of Appointment	7 years max.	7 years max.	7 years max.
Compensation	Salary	Stipend	Stipend
Award administered by	GSURF (if external sponsor)	GSURF	Fellow
Recommended Minimum Salary	\$30,000/yr FTE	(set by sponsor)	(set by sponsor)
Income Tax Owed ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income Tax Withheld	Yes	No	No
1099 or W2 Filed by GSU	Yes	Yes	No
GSU Panther Card	Required	Required	Required
GSU Parking Eligible	Yes	Yes	Yes
GSU Services (library, etc.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background Investigation	Required	Required	Required
Right-to-Know Training	Required	Required	Required
Responsible Conduct of Research Training	Required	Required	Required
Retirement Benefits	TRS or ORP	(none)	(none)
Health Insurance	Employee insurance	Group (student and fellow) insurance offered	Group (student and fellow) insurance offered
Employer Contribution	State	According to Sponsor	(sponsor)
Annual Leave ²	10 hours/month	according to sponsored funding guidelines ³	
Sick Leave ²	8 hours/month	according to sponsored guidelines ³	

¹Fellows should consult the award program and IRS guidelines concerning income tax requirements.

²Consistent with other sponsored funded positions, there is no leave payout after the sponsored funded position ends. Specifically, accrued paid time off (e.g. vacation and sick time) must be used during the time of the postdoctoral fellowship; accrued paid time off may not be paid upon termination of employment or taken after the end of the funding period.

³It is the responsibility of the postdoctoral fellow and his or her mentor to adhere to the guidelines.