

**PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES RELEVANT
TO POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish standard guidelines for all postdoctoral associates at the University of Massachusetts Medical School ("UMMS").

APPLICATION

This document supersedes and takes the place of any other employment policy document at UMMS with the exception of those policies referenced in this document.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Postdoctoral associates are trainees who are employees of UMMS and unless otherwise stated in this document, are subject to all UMMS employment policies. Administrative responsibility rests with the academic departments and Human Resources. The Office for Postdoctoral Scholars will provide general administrative oversight and assistance. The Office of Research will provide support for funding related issues.

POSITION DEFINITION

Postdoctoral associates must have received a Ph.D., M.D., D.V.M., or equivalent degree from an accredited institution or fulfilled all requirements for the degree as documented by the degree awarding institution. If there are questions about the equivalency of an applicant's advanced degree, it is the sole responsibility of the applicant to provide independent verification of his/her qualifications.

Postdoctoral associate positions are considered training positions. Postdoctoral associates will be engaged primarily in research with minimal or no didactic teaching responsibilities. Applicants for postdoctoral associate positions who have less than seven full years of postdoctoral experience at institutions other than UMMS are eligible to apply for postdoctoral associate positions at UMMS and, if hired, may continue at UMMS as a postdoctoral associate for up to seven years. Applicants who have more than seven years of postdoctoral experience at institutions other than UMMS are not eligible to apply for postdoctoral associate positions at UMMS but may apply for research staff positions. After seven years as a postdoctoral associate at UMMS, the postdoctoral associate must be transitioned to a staff or faculty position or terminated (see below).

Postdoctoral associates are not hired for any particular period or term and are considered "at will" employees.

All new postdoctoral associates at UMMS, including contingent worker postdoctoral associates, will be required to complete training in Responsible Conduct of Research within six months of the start date. This training is offered through the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the Office for Postdoctoral Scholars. Ph.D. graduates of UMMS who are employed as a postdoctoral associate at UMMS for more than 6 months following the completion of Ph.D. requirements are also required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research training.

Any individual who is not a U.S. Citizen or does not have permanent residence is required to have a valid visa to enter and work in the United States. All new hires must complete an Employment Eligibility Verification form (USCIS Form I-9) establishing his/her ability to work in the United States before commencing work.

University-sponsored postdoctoral associates generally enter the USA on a J-1 or H-1B visa or, if a recent graduate of a Ph.D. Program in the United States, must have an F1 Optional Practical Training EAD card.

Administrative responsibility for UMMS F, J and H-visas rests with [Immigration Services](#) in Human Resources. The telephone number is (508) 856-5620. It is the responsibility of the Department Administrator in conjunction with the hiring Principal Investigator ("PI") to work with Immigration Services to complete the necessary paperwork for issuing, maintaining, and renewing a visa.

Prior to any travel outside the United States, a postdoctoral associate on a visa is required to discuss his/her travel plans with his/her mentor and obtain any necessary documentation from Immigration Services.

EMPLOYMENT PROCESSES

Hiring

The hiring process for postdoctoral associates will follow the guidelines and procedures established by UMMS Human Resources. Upon acceptance of a postdoctoral position with a specific mentor at UMMS, the successful candidate will be contacted by Human Resources and will receive an official offer letter containing all relevant information and documents pertaining to initiating his/her appointment at UMMS, including but not limited to benefit information and terms of employment. Postdoctoral mentors are required to have faculty status at UMMS.

Offers of employment require the candidate to authorize and successfully complete a background review.

A new postdoctoral associate must complete all the necessary pre-employment paperwork, obtain Employee Health clearance and attend new employee orientation. Human Resources Service Center, working with the Department Administrator, will oversee this process.

A Personnel Action form must be processed for the initial appointment. Subsequent changes in status, including, but not limited to funding changes, salary changes, increase or decrease in work hours, and termination, require a new PA form. PA forms are the responsibility of the Department Administrator, but it is the responsibility of the postdoctoral associate and the associate's mentor to communicate changes in status to the Department Administrator as far in advance as possible.

The first six months of employment at UMMS is considered a probationary period. If a postdoctoral associate transfers to a new position within UMMS, there is a three month probationary period. See the UMMS Probationary Period Policy {HR Policy [06.04.08](#)}.

Promotion

Promotion from postdoctoral associate to a research staff position

Promotion from postdoctoral associate to a staff position may occur if the following conditions are met:

- postdoctoral associate has a demonstrated record of successful performance;
- postdoctoral associate wishes to continue in a research capacity at UMMS;
- postdoctoral associate's mentor or other PI is willing to support the continued employment of the postdoctoral associate as a member of the research staff.

Postdoctoral associates who have completed postdoctoral training and who meet the above criteria will be eligible to continue employment at UMMS as a Research Specialist or other positions at the same or higher grade. The Administrator or his/her designee will create a job requisition, which will be reviewed and approved by Human Resources and subsequently posted on the Human Resources Careers website. The postdoctoral associate will apply for the position through the website. Current compensation scales for each job category can be found on the HR website.

It is the responsibility of the postdoctoral associate, the associate's mentor, and the Department Administrator to process the change in employment status.

Promotion of a postdoctoral associate to a faculty position

Postdoctoral associates with appropriate levels of experience and accomplishment and the potential to become an independently funded researcher may be nominated by their Department Chair for promotion to the faculty using existing procedures. Information on the [faculty promotion process](#) can be found at the Faculty Affairs web site.

Termination

The Disciplinary Action Policy and the Dispute Resolution Policy {HR Policies [06.06.02](#) and [06.06.03](#)} do not apply to postdoctoral associates.

Termination within Probationary Period

During the probationary period, after consultation with Human Resources, a postdoctoral associate may be terminated at any time for any reason (that is not unlawful) without notice or cause.

Termination following Probationary Period

Employment can be terminated at any time for any lawful reason. Notice should be provided in writing by the postdoctoral associate's mentor at least ninety (90) days before termination. The ninety (90) day notice may be working or non-working at the sole and exclusive discretion of the mentor and Human Resources.

Immigration Services will make reasonable efforts to contact postdoctoral associates on visas and their departments well in advance of the visa expiration date to discuss extension of the visa, if applicable. However, it is the responsibility of the postdoctoral associate to be aware of the visa end date; it is recommended that the postdoctoral associate and mentor discuss and resolve the issue of visa extension 3-6 months prior to the visa expiration date. If no extension is planned, notice of termination should be given 90 days from the visa expiration date. However, even if notice is not given, the visa termination date will be the last day of employment.

Resignation

Notice of resignation by a postdoctoral associate should be given sixty (60) days in advance.

Suspension/Termination

In consultation with Human Resources, postdoctoral associates may be immediately suspended (unless prohibited by the granting agency's regulations) if in the judgment of the mentor and Department Chair/Program Director, the individual's actions represent a threat to safety or a clear impediment to the work of a research lab or are in violation of UMMS policies and procedures. In the Chair's/Program Director's absence, either the Associate Dean, Office for Postdoctoral Scholars, the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, or the Associate Provost for Biomedical Science Research may substitute.

Upon request of the postdoctoral associate, the mentor, or the Department Chair/Program Director, HR will conduct an investigation. If the findings support the prior decision to suspend, the employment of the postdoctoral associate may be terminated following consultation with the mentor, Chair/Program Director, and Human Resources.

If the postdoctoral associate is on a visa, Immigration Services must be notified of the termination in order to notify the appropriate governmental agencies.

Granting agency regulations

All awards for postdoctoral associates are accepted with the understanding that their terms and conditions will be adhered to by UMMS. In the event that there is a conflict between the conditions required by the granting agency and UMMS policy, it is the

responsibility of the Office of the Associate Provost for Biomedical Science Research to resolve the conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved, UMMS HR policies prevail. It is the responsibility of the postdoctoral associate to understand and be aware of any special conditions, such as the pay-back provision on federal training grants that are associated with any postdoctoral funding awards. The postdoctoral associate's mentor and the Department Administrator should also be aware of any special conditions associated with any postdoctoral funding awards and should discuss these with the postdoctoral associate at the time of the award's acceptance.

COMPENSATION

Salary

The minimum salary paid to postdoctoral associates is set according to institutional practices and is reviewed annually by Human Resources and the Office for Postdoctoral Scholars. Initial hiring salaries may be higher than the established minimum level, provided the salary level is consistent with institutional policies. Although individual mentors may choose to compensate postdoctoral associates at the NIH scale, this is not a requirement. Individuals receiving external fellowship salary awards are generally paid the stipend indicated by the award. In cases where the awarded stipend is less than the postdoctoral associate's current salary, the salary should be supplemented from another funding source or from discretionary funds, if available.

Salaries for part time appointments are prorated. The minimum part time appointment is for 10% time unless restricted by visa status.

Salary Increases

Postdoctoral associates are not eligible for any proposed UMMS across-the-board, salary or merit increases. Salary increases are determined by the postdoctoral associate's mentor based on performance and availability of funding. Mentors are encouraged to review a postdoctoral associate's salary and to provide a raise annually if performance merits an increase and funding budgets permit an increase. Salaries for postdoctoral personnel are usually increased on the hire date anniversary, according to institutional practices.

Additional Compensation

On occasion, a postdoctoral associate may be compensated for work completed at UMMS that does not pertain to their full-time research position. Prior to accepting and completing this additional work, the postdoctoral associate must have the approval of the mentor and must inform the Department Administrator.

Taxes

Federal, state and Medicare taxes will be paid by all postdoctoral associates unless the individual is a citizen of a country that has a tax treaty with the U.S. Government. Whether a postdoctoral associate qualifies under a tax treaty should be determined in consultation with Immigration Services {508-856-5620; [Immigration Services](#)}.

Retirement Deduction

A retirement deduction is taken from each paycheck for all postdoctoral associates who are eligible to become members of the State Retirement System. These deductions are mandatory. These deductions are refunded upon Termination if an individual has not become vested, according to State Board of Retirement guidelines [{State Board of Retirement}](#).

Health, Life, Long-Term Disability and Dental Insurance

Postdoctoral associates employed by UMMS at 50% or more time and receiving a salary from UMMS are eligible for enrollment in UMMS group health, dental, life, and long-term disability insurance plans [{Post Docs Benefits at a Glance}](#).

When a stipend is paid directly from an outside agency to the postdoctoral associate, the individual is not eligible for group insurance because he/she is not an employee. In some cases, the department can confer eligibility by arranging for an account to be set up into which funds from the outside agency are first deposited and then paid out to the individual as salary via the personnel action process. Department Administrators should check with the Office of the Associate Provost for Biomedical Science Research to determine if this is possible.

In cases where it is not possible to establish an account and a postdoctoral associate needs health insurance, the Department may arrange insurance through Human Resources Benefits. The mentor has the option to reimburse the postdoctoral associate for the cost of the health insurance.

Temporary Worker Status

Employing a postdoctoral associate who is eligible for benefits as a temporary worker in order to avoid paying benefits is not permitted. Any requests for exceptions must be approved by the Office for Postdoctoral Scholars, and, if relevant, Immigration Services.

ATTENDANCE

Work Week

The work week consists of a minimum of 40 hours a week as defined by the supervising mentor. Part-time postdoctoral associates have a prorated work week.

Vacation Days, Personal Days and Holidays

Postdoctoral associates are eligible for vacation time and personal days in accordance with guidelines set forth by UMMS Human Resources [{Benefits Summary}](#). At present, there are thirteen (13) paid holidays per year. The [UMMS Holiday Calendar](#) is available on the Human Resources website. Postdoctoral associates are not eligible to receive comp time if they work a paid holiday.

Sick Days

Postdoctoral associates are eligible for sick time in accordance with guidelines set forth by UMMS Human Resources {HR Policy [06.01.10](#)}. Postdoctoral sick time can be used

for personal and/or family illness but cannot be used as a supplement to vacation time. There is no compensation for any unused sick time upon termination. Postdoctoral associates are eligible to join the UMMS Sick Leave Bank {HR

Policy [06.01.09](#)}. Unpaid Personal Leave of Absence

Postdoctoral associates may be granted an Unpaid Personal Leave of Absence if approved by the mentor, and the Department Chair/Program Director or Designee, in accordance with the appropriate UMMS policy, providing the grantor policy permits. If the funding source does not permit unpaid leave or will expire prior to the end of the leave and the department grants the leave, the Department in conjunction with the Office of Research must negotiate the disposition for any remaining funds with the grant agency {HR Policy [06.01.13](#)}.

Family or Medical Leave of Absence

Postdoctoral associates must be granted family or medical leave of absence by the mentor and Department Chair/Program Director or designee in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act. Accrued sick, personal, and vacation days may be used during the leave. Otherwise, the leave is unpaid. If the funding source will expire prior to the end of the leave, the postdoctoral associate would be terminated at that time, thus terminating the leave. See UMMS Family and Medical Leave Policy {HR Policy [06.01.02](#)}.

ACADEMIC DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Reasonable efforts should be made by both the postdoctoral associate and the supervising mentor to resolve any academic disputes involving the postdoctoral associate and anyone else, including the supervising mentor. Unresolved academic issues, by written request of the postdoctoral associate, will be considered according to the following process. All responses must be in writing.

Step One

- Postdoctoral associate contacts the Chairperson or Program Director within ten (10) working days of the inability to resolve the conflict.
- Chairperson or Program Director responds to the postdoctoral associate within ten (10) working days.

Step Two

- If unsatisfied with the response, the postdoctoral associate requests review by the Associate Dean, Office for Postdoctoral Scholars within ten (10) working days of receipt of Step One response.
- The Associate Dean, Office for Postdoctoral Scholars responds to the postdoctoral associate within ten (10) working days.
- If the Associate Dean, Office for Postdoctoral Scholars is in conflict or is unavailable, the review will be conducted by the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences or his/her designee.

Step Three

- If unsatisfied with the response, the postdoctoral associate requests review by the

Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences within ten (10) working days of receipt of Step Two response.

- The Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences responds to the postdoctoral associate within ten (10) working days. The decision of the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences is final.
- If the Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences is in conflict or unavailable, the review will be conducted by the Associate Provost for Biomedical Science Research, or his/her designate.

Note: Separate school-wide policies and/or guidelines are in place covering sexual harassment, consensual amorous relationships, and discrimination. Please contact the [Diversity and Inclusion Office](#) (DIO) at (508) 856-2179.

SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

All postdoctoral associates are expected to abide by UMMS' Policy on Scientific Misconduct {[Scientific Misconduct Policy](#)}. Concerns should be brought to the Office of the Associate Provost for Biomedical Science Research at 508-856-1572.

CONTINGENT WORKER STATUS

Postdoctoral associates who bring their own funding and are not employed by UMMS should be officially registered as contingent workers. The existing policy for contingent workers should be followed {HR Policy [06.05.22](#)}.

It is the Department Administrator's and mentor's responsibility to register any volunteer/contingent worker who will be coming into contact with radioactive substances with Radiation Safety for training and badge monitoring, and with Environmental Health and Safety for *Right to Know* training and, if applicable, Biohazard training.