

FACULTY SENATE ISSUE FORM
Date Submitted: 05/30/2023
Title of Issue (a short descriptive title by which the issue may be referenced)
Postdoctoral Policy - Faculty Handbook
Description of Issue:
The Faculty Handbook references postdoctoral associates but does not describe their role in any detail.
Rational for Submission:
The proposed policy will fill a major lacuna in the Faculty Handbook. It seeks to create the necessary guidance for the hiring, training, retention, and assessment of postdoctoral associates, who are critical to the University's research mission.
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For Faculty Senate Use Only
Assigned to Committee:
Date Assigned:

Postdoctoral Associates

Overview

Postdoctoral associates, commonly known as “postdocs,” are scholars who have completed a doctoral degree and who have joined the University to advance their research training while working under the supervision and mentorship of full-time faculty. A postdoctoral associate position is a limited trainee position and not intended for long-term or career appointments. Postdoctoral associate positions may be funded either through University sources or through externally sponsored grants. For those in the latter category, see the Old Dominion University Research Foundation Employee Handbook for additional employment information.

A. Duties and Responsibilities

Postdoctoral associates are expected fulfill the following duties and responsibilities:

- Continue training in their specialty area under the mentorship and supervision of full-time faculty;
- Conduct research and scholarship and publish the results when appropriate;
- Exercise limited supervision over research staff;
- Write and submit grant proposals and serve as co-principal investigator, when appropriate;
- Submit funding proposals to federal agencies and other sources as they relate to their individual professional development; and
- Complete other duties as assigned.

Postdoctoral associates typically do not teach courses but may be approved to do so by their faculty mentors in exceptional circumstances.

B. Recruitment Process

Postdoctoral associates must ordinarily be appointed with a competitive search. Hiring units must gather the following information as part of the search process:

- A description listing the duties and responsibilities of the position;
- The name of the academic department or research center, as well as the faculty mentor who will be directing the individual;
- Confirmation that sufficient funding is available to fund the position through externally sponsored funds or other sources for a minimum of one year;
- The curriculum vitae of the proposed candidate; and
- A description of how the candidate was identified and why the particular recruitment mechanism was selected.

Faculty mentors are strongly encouraged to recruit postdoctoral associates from among groups traditionally underrepresented in their disciplines.

In exceptional circumstances, a postdoctoral associate may be appointed without a competitive search. These include, but are not limited to, postdoctoral associates who arrive at the University with their own source of funding or those who accompany newly hired faculty who are moving from another institution. In such situations, appointments must follow the policy on emergency hiring and must be approved additionally by either the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research.

Faculty mentors are also required to report personnel-related information about their postdoctoral associates, once hired, to the Office of Research for purposes of the National Science Foundation's annual Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS).

C. Appointment Offer

An offer for employment is contingent upon the candidate's presentation of satisfactory documentation of credentials and degrees awarded prior to the effective date of the appointment. These shall include proof of the receipt of the terminal degree, most commonly the Ph.D. degree. Contingent offers may be made to Ph.D. candidates with confirmation from the awarding institution that all degree requirements, including the dissertation defense, have been completed and the degree is on schedule to be conferred. Credentialing information must be placed on file with the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Offers to postdoctoral associates supported on externally sponsored grants may be extended by the principal investigator with the approval of the chair or director of the sponsoring academic and/or research unit, while offers to postdoctoral associates supported by University sources may only be extended by the chair or director of the sponsoring academic and/or research unit and approved additionally by either the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research.

No offer shall be effective until signed by the postdoctoral associate, the principal investigator (when sponsored grant funding is involved), and the chair or director of the sponsoring academic and/or research unit.

D. Conditions and Term of Appointment

Postdoctoral associates shall be given a salary set in accordance with federal pay standards. They shall receive the same employment benefits ordinarily provided to teaching and research faculty.

Subject to the approval of the appropriate dean or director, postdoctoral associates are assigned to work in designated academic and/or research units. Supervisors must provide postdoctoral associates with detailed mentoring plans soon after they begin their appointments. If continuing in the appointment for more than twelve months, postdoctoral associates and their supervisors

shall together develop individual development plans (IDPs) to include prospective research projects, professional needs, and career objectives.

Appointments are generally made in one-year renewable terms. The total duration of an individual's postdoctoral service may not exceed five years; under exceptional circumstances the University may grant an exception to this limit, but not to exceed a sixth year, with the approval of the academic or research unit's dean or director and the Provost and Vice president for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research. New hires are subject to the University's policy on criminal background checks.

E. Sponsorship of Non-Immigrant Postdocs

Postdoctoral associates who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents or who are not authorized to accept full-time employment incident to status must obtain University sponsorship of their non-immigrant visa. In such cases, the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA) will assist the sponsoring academic or research unit in meeting the immigration requirements of the postdoctoral associate's appointment. Candidates, depending on the length of the appointment and if the position is directly related to their major area of study, may be able to extend their F-1 student visa for the purposes of Optional Practical Training (OPT) for 12 months, and in some cases an additional 24-months for certain science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors.

An offer of employment as a postdoctoral associate, or assistance in securing employment authorization, should not be construed as a guarantee that such authorization will be approved by U.S. immigration authorities. Employment may not begin until the postdoctoral associate has the authorization to work at the University.

Postdoctoral associates who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents are subject to all immigration laws and regulations, and, along with the University's policy on criminal background checks, they may be subject to additional security screenings.

The responsibility for maintaining legal status in the U.S. rests solely with the non-immigrant postdoctoral associate. All postdoctoral associates must undergo required onboarding and demonstrate their authorization to work in the U.S. The employment of any non-immigrant postdoctoral associate whose employment authorization is no longer valid for any reason will be terminated in accordance with federal law and University employment policy. The University does not sponsor postdoctoral associates for U.S. permanent residency.

F. Expiration of Term

Following expiration of the appointment, a postdoctoral associate must leave all original notebooks, data, reagents, and any other data and/or study components or University property with the faculty mentor in a state that allows uninterrupted continuation of the research and

scholarship and permit compliance with University policies. The postdoctoral associate may make copies of their research and scholarship data. It is strongly recommended that a co-authorship and data-sharing plan be negotiated between the faculty mentor and postdoctoral associate prior to initiating each project and that those agreements are put into writing.

G. Subsequent Employment

It is expected that postdoctoral associates will ordinarily seek employment outside the University upon completion of their terms. A postdoctoral associate may on occasion seek subsequent employment by the University as teaching and research faculty but only through the standard competitive recruitment and hiring process. In addition, a postdoctoral associate may, on a case-by-case basis, be appointed subsequently as a self-supporting research professional (SSRP) on a non-competitive basis with the approval of the academic or research unit's dean or director and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research (see SSRP policy).

H. Resignation

A postdoctoral associate shall provide at least two-week's notice of resignation if leaving prior to the end of the appointment period.

I. Termination

The employment of a postdoctoral research associate may be terminated at any time without cause, for reasons including but not limited to reduced availability of funds or changes in the nature and scope of work, upon ninety (90) days written notice. Such termination must be approved by the academic or research unit's dean or director and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research.

In addition, a postdoctoral associate may be terminated at any time for cause. Causes for termination may include, but are not limited to, violation of conditions of appointment, violation of University policy, destruction of University property, destruction of experiments, stealing, sexual harassment, and/or inappropriate behavior. Termination shall be immediate upon receiving written notice of termination for cause.

The academic or research unit's dean or director shall consult with and notify the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Vice President for the Eastern Virginia Health Sciences Center, or the Vice President for Research, as well as the Vice President for Human Resources, Equity, and Diversity, prior to taking any action to terminate for cause.

Postdoctoral associates may receive leave payout upon their termination without cause or for cause.