



Campus Administrative Policy

Policy Title: **Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees**

Policy Number: 1009D **Functional Area:** Academic and Faculty Affairs

Effective: January 1, 2025

Approved by: Executive Vice Chancellor
Ann Sherman

Applies to: CU Denver Campus

A. **INTRODUCTION**

Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees (also sometimes called postdocs, postdoctoral scholars, or “regular fellows,”) constitute one of the mainstays of the research enterprise at the CU Denver Campus. Because of their high level of education, Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees (hereafter referred to as “Fellow[s] or postdoctoral fellows”) are able to work in a semi-independent manner on one or more research projects under the direction of the principal investigator with whom they are training.

B. **DEFINITION OF A RESEARCH POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW/TRAINEE**

This definition applies to *all* Fellows at the University regardless of their source of funding.

- The appointee holds a Ph.D. or other terminal doctorate degree in an appropriate field; and
- The appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar; and
- The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of their research or scholarship; and
- The appointee is expected to be actively engaged in their career development and to seek out opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to transition to their chosen career; and
- The appointment is at will, transitional, and limited in time and scope; (See Section C below; and
- The appointment is usually made at a 1.0 FTE and postdoctoral fellows supported by a training grant must be appointed at a 1.0 FTE; and
- Postdoctoral fellows who wish to be appointed at less than a 1.0 FTE, for example, so that they may simultaneously explore other career opportunities, should seek approval

from their supervisor for an appointment at less than 1.0 FTE. Postdoctoral fellows who are approved for a less than a 1.0 FTE appointment are still required to sign and submit a conflict-of-interest form and are also bound by other policies of the university (such as the institutional intellectual property agreement); and

- The appointment is viewed as preparatory to a full-time research-intensive or research- related career, including careers inside or outside of academia.

C. TERM LIMITS FOR RESEARCH POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW/TRAINEE APPOINTMENTS

- A research postdoctoral fellow should have a maximum of five years of postdoctoral experience at the University. Time spent as a postdoctoral fellow at other institutions is not included in the five-year term limit.
- Individuals who are retained at the University beyond this five-year term limit may be hired through standard recruitment processes into a regular job classification, such as Instructor, Research Associate, Senior Research Associate, or Assistant Professor.
- Research postdoctoral fellow and their faculty mentor may petition the dean of the school in which the faculty member has their primary appointment for an extension to these terms.

D. MINIMUM SALARY AT INITIAL APPOINTMENT

- The suggested initial minimum stipend/salary for postdoctoral fellows is defined in the current NIH training grant guidelines. All full-time postdoctoral fellows must receive a stipend either equal to, or above, the NIH guidelines for a postdoctoral fellow with no previous experience.
- Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the dean of the school in which the faculty member has their primary appointment.
- In disciplines not funded by federal agencies, the dean of the appropriate school or college will establish appropriate salary guidelines.

E. GRIEVANCE AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

- Each school/college should establish their own procedures for handling grievances involving professionalism issues, salary, benefits, and work conditions. Clear directions for how to appeal decisions will be developed by the school/college. The final decision rests with the dean of the school/college in which the fellow is employed.
- Each postdoctoral fellow must receive an annual evaluation. This process can be completed according to the procedures adopted by the school/college into which the postdoctoral fellow is hired. In addition, for schools and colleges that would prefer that the Provost Office facilitate the evaluation of postdoctoral fellows, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education will provide an on-line application so that faculty can complete an annual evaluation of each of their postdoctoral fellows. Upon request, the Provost Office will also provide the department chairperson, or other

direct supervisor of faculty who have postdoctoral fellows in their lab, notification that this report was completed by the faculty and seen by the fellow.

F. UNIFORM BENEFITS

- CU Denver Campus uses job code 1438 for all postdoctoral fellows. Research postdoctoral fellows/trainees, who are paid through the university regardless of the source of the funds that support their salary, are considered to be employees of the university. As such, all research postdoctoral fellows/trainees employed 50% or more, will receive benefits as outlined below (and detailed in the Benefits Eligibility Matrix on the Employment Services website).
- All are subject to standard employee withholdings, including FICA (in accordance with their citizenship, residency, or visa status).
- Benefits include the standard employee offerings and are subject to the same eligibility and usage requirements as other employment classifications. This includes group medical and dental insurance, life and AD&D insurance, short and long-term disability, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, Flexible Spending Accounts, and COBRA upon termination.
 - Postdoctoral fellows, residing and working in Colorado, are eligible for Family Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) as all eligible in state employees are. FAMLI pays for a portion of an employee's weekly salary for up to 12 weeks of leave to care for themselves or a family member. Eligibility for FAMLI insurance begins the first day of employment. More information on FAMLI is available [here](#). Leave benefits for fellows/trainees employed 50% or more include: the below. 12 working days of vacation and 12 working days of sick leave per fiscal year for a total of 24 working days (or 192 hours) for full-time positions per fiscal year are paid by the department. The full leave policy is [here](#). The requested time off process should follow department guidelines.
 - Vacation and sick time can be carried over from year to year during the tenure of an appointment as a postdoctoral fellow/trainee, but upon termination of the Post Doc appointment, unused leave at termination date will be forfeited. Remaining leave balances cannot be transferred to other ~~regular~~ job classification positions within the University of Colorado system.
 - Maximum accrual is capped at 44 working days (or 352 hours) of combined sick and vacation leave.
 - Accrual and usage follow the prevailing University practices used for other employee classifications. Hours shall be accrued each month at the rate of one day (or 8 hours) each for sick leave and vacation leave, and available for use at the beginning of the next month. Prorated leave shall be accrued for partial month hires and for appointment of at least 50 % but less than 100%.
 - Postdoctoral fellows are eligible for Family Medical Leave per the standard criteria used for other campus faculty positions, including Paid Parental Leave.
 - Postdoctoral fellows are afforded leave in accordance with University policy for all employees for holidays, military duty, bereavement, and jury duty.

- Should University, State, or federally supported grant policies change, requiring equitable change in the number of leave days/hours afforded those in postdoctoral fellow positions, the changes will be adjusted accordingly and become effective without requiring formal amendment to this written policy.

G. PERIODIC REVIEW

- The Offices of the Provost and Human Resources will review this policy, and how it is being administered, on an ad hoc, as needed, basis, but no less frequently than every five to seven years in accordance with campus administrative policy 3000, *Establishing Campus Administrative Policies*.

Notes

1. History:
 - January 1, 2009: Adopted by the Provost
 - January 1, 2013: Amended
 - July 13, 2015: Revised
 - May 9, 2018: Modified to reflect a Campus-wide effort to recast and revitalize various Campus policy sites into a standardized and more coherent set of chaptered policy statements organized around the several operational divisions of the university.
 - June 1, 2019: Revised
 - June 1, 2019: Minor clarifications to clarify career expectations, bring the policy more in alignment with NIH standards and clarify funding & benefits. Policy review cycle changed to 5-7 years to be in line with campus policy 3000 review cycle.
 - November 11, 2019: Technical clarifications: leave balances do not transfer to other positions at the university, all postdocs in jobs code 1438 are subject to FICA.
 - November 11, 2019, June 23, 2020: Technical Clarification
 - July 23, 2020: Clarified leave balance transfer rules
 - January 1, 2023: Policy 1009 was recast into separate policies for Denver (1009D) and Anschutz (1009A). 1009D was further revised to remove all references to the role of the Graduate School, to which CU Denver no longer affiliates as of July 1, 2022.
 - January 1, 2025: Revised to include FAMLI benefits
2. Cross References/Appendix:
 - Supersedes: Research Postdoctoral Fellows/Trainees (January 1, 2019)
3. Responsible Office(s):
 - Office of Human Resources
 - Office of Graduate Education