Policy for Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Appointments

Effective July 1, 2008
(Revised July 2014)

At the University of Georgia (UGA), 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 scholars that will contribute significantly to the formal instructional mission of UGA may be appointed, with final approval by the Provost, to positions that carry a title that formally recognizes the joint research and teaching expectations.

Postdoctoral research (& teaching) 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 and educational 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 (& teaching) scholar, by emphasizing the mutual commitment and responsibility of the institution, the faculty, and the scholar.

This policy defines terms and conditions related to postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointments at the University of Georgia. Additionally, postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointees are subject to all other applicable UGA 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 should be submitted to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs within the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR). OVPR is responsible for administering the postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee policy, periodically reviewing the policy for revisions as needed, and taking active steps to encourage compliance with the policy.

Definition

The definition of postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee used by UGA 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 appointee’s assigned responsibilities; and
- the assigned responsibilities of the appointee are substantially research and/or scholarship but may combine these responsibilities with significant (no more than 50%) formal instructional responsibilities; and
- the appointment is full time, limited term; and
- the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career.

UGA has two categories of postdoctoral research appointees, Postdoctoral Research Associates and Postdoctoral Research Fellows, and two categories of postdoctoral research and teaching appointees, Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Associates and Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Fellows:

Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates are usually funded from UGA-administered grants or contracts and are considered employees of the University, receiving a salary for required services. They

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1 Based on the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology definition of postdoctoral fellows
are in training as they perform work on a funded project, so we also consider them employees. This enables the University to provide essential services and benefits. Appointment as a Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Associate includes a significant set of responsibilities in formal instruction, also considered employment.

Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellows primarily have educational or training status. They are provided a stipend for which no service is required. The stipend may be provided directly to the recipient from an external source or provided through UGA from an external source (e.g., a federal training grant). If a fellow is receiving the stipend directly from an external source, he or she is appointed as a Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellow Adjunct for the purposes of establishing their affiliation with UGA. Appointment as a Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Fellow or Fellow Adjunct implies a significant amount of training in formal instructional venues.

A summary table comparing the details of each appointment type is provided below. In this document, the term "postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee" or "postdoctoral research (& teaching) scholar" applies to both Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates and Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellows.

**Expectations**

**Postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee**

The University has adopted the following set of expectations of postdoctoral research (& teaching) 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. for postdoctoral research & teaching appointees, active participation in training and assessment activities related to formal instructional responsibilities;
6. publication of research or scholarship during the period of the appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor;
7. collegial conduct toward coworkers; and
8. compliance with all sponsor, UGA, and USG policies and procedures, including observation of established guidelines for research involving biohazards, human subjects, or animals.

**Mentor**

The postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee should be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member in the unit to which the appointee is assigned. Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the work and advanced training of postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointees. In that role, at the time employment or training begins, faculty mentors should provide the postdoctoral research (& teaching) 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 appointees, provide regular and timely assessments of performance at least annually, and provide career advice and job placement assistance.

**Appointment Procedures**

The unit in which a postdoctoral research (& teaching) scholar is appointed is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed and complete files are established at the time of appointment. Units should submit an appointment packet for all appointees to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in OVPR. The appointment packet should include the routing form and the additional items listed on the routing form, which can be found here: [http://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/pdf/Postdoc-Routing-and-Approval.pdf](http://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/pdf/Postdoc-Routing-and-Approval.pdf). The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs will maintain centralized records of postdoctoral research appointments. The Office of Faculty Affairs will maintain centralized records of postdoctoral research and teaching appointments.
If a unit eventually wishes to move a postdoctoral research scholar into a new faculty or staff position at a later date, then a search at that time would be required unless they conducted a search for the original postdoctoral position. Therefore, it is advantageous to conduct an initial search for postdoctoral positions.

Units are required to submit a new routing form and offer letter only for current postdoctoral research (& teaching) scholars who are transferring to another unit or starting a new postdoctoral position or for previous scholars that are returning to UGA for a new postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointment.

Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates and Fellows and Adjuncts must obtain a UGA Card and UGA MyID, providing access to physical facilities and online services, including access to libraries, access to recreational facilities, public transportation, parking, etc. All must complete right-to-know and safety training through UGA Environmental Safety Division.

Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates must follow all UGA employment procedures, which include completing payroll and benefits forms (as detailed on the UGA Human Resources web site http://www.hr.uga.edu/).

Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellow Adjuncts will be entered into UGA’s personnel system so that their affiliation with UGA is established.

Term of Appointment
The maximum term of appointment for a postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee at this institution is five years. This limit is based on federal guidelines and the tenet that postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointments are primarily for training, which has a natural duration. The term refers to the total time spent at UGA as a postdoctoral research (& teaching) 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 five-year term limit may be interrupted for extended medical or family leaves. Exceptions to the five-year term limit will be considered by OVPR; 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 (& teaching) appointees do not exceed the five-year term limit. OVPR periodically will review postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointments to ensure compliance. If the maximum term of appointment is reached, an appointee must be moved into an established position or separated with a minimum ninety days notice. Established positions appropriate after a five-year postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointment include:

- Senior Research Associate – this staff position is the most appropriate for a postdoctoral research scholar who remains with the same research group beyond the five-year training period. Senior Research Associates may act as Principal Investigators in submitting proposals for research funding.
- Research Professional IV – this staff position is the highest in the series and is appropriate for researchers with a PhD degree;
- Assistant Research Scientist – this nontenure-track research faculty position is similar to the assistant professor position and requires approval by unit faculty (http://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/research/Research-Scientist-Appointment-Promotion.pdf). Note that Assistant Research Scientists are appointed within units (e.g., departments, schools, centers, institutes), not within research groups. Appointment to these positions should be reserved for those postdoctoral research scholars who are on a trajectory for independent accomplishment. Standard advancement within a research group would usually involve appointment as a Senior Research Associate (above).
- Lecturer/Instructor – Postdoctoral research & teaching scholars may be appointed to one of these nontenure-track faculty positions should they wish to pursue an academic teaching career.
Lecturers and Instructors are appointed within units following standard faculty search and appointment procedures.

A postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointee may be terminated prior to the five-year term limit with a minimum:

- Ninety days notice if the funding supporting a Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associate ends;
- Two weeks notice for failure to adhere to the expectations described above (note that this two-week notice also applies to termination during the initial six-month probationary period);
- No notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated.

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

**Evaluation**
Recognizing that Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates and 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 must 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**
UGA believes that postdoctoral research (& teaching) scholars should be compensated at a level appropriate to their advanced education and training, as well as their value to the research enterprise. The University strongly recommends a minimum salary of $36,000 in FY2015 for Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates. However, in some disciplines external funding agencies provide salary guidance that suggests higher minimum stipends and in those cases, our recommendation follows that guidance (e.g., in the biological sciences, the National Institutes of Health publishes guidelines: [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-14-046.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-14-046.html)).

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

**Leave**
Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates and Fellows are eligible for 10 hours per month of paid annual leave (unless on academic payroll) and 8 hours per month of sick leave. There is no provision for leave payout upon separation. Other aspects of the leave policy are the same as for all employees.

**Health Insurance**
Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates participate in UGA employee health insurance, subject to HR policies, whereas Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellows and Adjuncts are not considered employees and currently may acquire their own private health insurance or may choose to participate in the group health insurance plan offered to UGA graduate students.

**Retirement Program**
Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates have the option of participating either in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia or an Optional Retirement Plan (ORP). Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellows and Fellow Adjuncts can use institutional administrative allowance funds to make voluntary payments into other individually selected retirement plans only when sponsors allow such expenditures. No institutional retirement contributions can be made. No institutional administrative allowance funds in a UGA restricted account can be transferred to a Fellow’s retirement account without
verification that the sponsor permits such payments from such funds. Verification must be provided through the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) to the Contracts and Grants (C&G) Office before transfers can take place.

http://www.hr.uga.edu/retirement-other-savings-options

**Other Benefits**

International Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Associates, Fellows, or Fellow Adjuncts should check with the University's Office of International Student, Scholar and Immigration Services (ISSIS; http://www.issis.uga.edu/) for assistance with questions regarding other fringe benefits and how they will be treated under federal law (i.e., social security, etc.).

For both Postdoctoral Research (& Teaching) Fellows and Adjuncts, the institutional administrative allowance provided by the sponsor may be used by the appointment unit to support allowable benefits-related expenses. Refer to the award terms and conditions. Expenses not covered by this institutional allowance are the responsibility of the appointment unit. Contact OVPR for potential matching of unit funds when this institutional support from the sponsor is inadequate to cover these fringe benefits.

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

**Grievance**

Postdoctoral research (& teaching) appointees have access to the same grievance policy as regular employees. Please refer to the following links:

- Policy: [http://www.hr.uga.edu/uga-grievance-disciplinary-review](http://www.hr.uga.edu/uga-grievance-disciplinary-review)
- Dispute Resolution Policy: [http://www.hr.uga.edu/uga-dispute-resolution-process](http://www.hr.uga.edu/uga-dispute-resolution-process)

See next page for a summary table of the position details.
## Summary Table of Postdoctoral Research Position Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research &amp; Teaching) Associate</th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research &amp; Teaching) Fellow</th>
<th>Postdoctoral Research &amp; Teaching) Fellow Adjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term of Appointment</strong></td>
<td>5 years max.</td>
<td>5 years max.</td>
<td>5 years max.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Stipend</td>
<td>Stipend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended Minimum</strong></td>
<td>$36,000/yr (100% EFT)</td>
<td>$36,000/yr (100% EFT)</td>
<td>(set by sponsor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Tax Owed</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Tax Withheld</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UGA MyID</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UGA Card</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UGA Parking Eligible</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UGA Services (library, etc.)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background Investigation</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right-to-Know Training</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laboratory Safety Training</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retirement Benefits</strong></td>
<td>TRS or ORP (with employer match)</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Insurance</strong></td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Group insurance offered</td>
<td>Group insurance offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Leave</strong></td>
<td>10 hours/month (unless on academic payroll)</td>
<td>10 hours/month (unless on academic payroll)</td>
<td>10 hours/month (unless on academic payroll)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick Leave</strong></td>
<td>8 hours/month</td>
<td>8 hours/month</td>
<td>8 hours/month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>