



Office of Research UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Policy for Postdoctoral Research and Research & Teaching Appointments

Effective July 1, 2008

(Revised June 2017)

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 experience and training that may include opportunities to enhance teaching and other professional skills. Postdoctoral appointees who contribute significantly to the formal instructional mission of UGA may be appointed, with final approval by the Provost, to positions carrying a title that formally recognizes the joint research and teaching expectations.

Postdoctoral research and research & teaching appointees contribute to the academic community by enhancing the research and education programs of the university. They bring expertise, insights 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 research/research & teaching appointee, by emphasizing the shared commitment and responsibility of the institution, the faculty, and the scholar.

This policy defines terms and conditions related to postdoctoral research and research & teaching appointments at the University of Georgia. Additionally, postdoctoral research and 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 Research. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is responsible for administering the postdoctoral research and 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 or postdoctoral research & teaching appointee used by UGA includes the following criteria:¹

- The appointee has received a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.V.M., Sc.D., M.D., PharmD), usually recently, in a field directly related to the appointee's assigned responsibilities; and
- the assigned responsibilities of the appointee are predominantly 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 career in academia, industry, government or the non-profit sector.

UGA has three categories of postdoctoral research appointees, Postdoctoral Research Associates, Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Postdoctoral Research Fellow Adjuncts, and three categories of postdoctoral research and teaching appointees, Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Associates, Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Fellows and Postdoctoral Research & Teaching Fellow Adjuncts.

¹ Based on the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology definition of postdoctoral fellows

Postdoctoral Research and 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 are in training as they perform work on a funded project, so they are also considered 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 and is also considered employment.

Postdoctoral Research and Postdoctoral Research & Teaching *Fellows* are provided a stipend for which *no service is required*. This stipend is provided directly to the recipient from an external source *through UGA* (e.g., a federal training grant).

Postdoctoral Research and Postdoctoral Research & Teaching *Fellow Adjuncts* are fellows receiving the stipend directly from an external source. 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/research & teaching appointee", "postdoctoral appointee" or "postdoctoral appointment" applies to all categories of appointees.

Expectations

Postdoctoral research/research & teaching appointee

The University has adopted the following set of expectations of postdoctoral research and 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, and timely completion of UGA required lab safety training programs;
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/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 advancing the training of postdoctoral research and research & teaching appointees. At the time employment or training begins, faculty mentors should provide the postdoctoral research/research & teaching appointee 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/research & teaching appointee is appointed is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed and complete files are established at the time of appointment.

1. Once proper unit approval to hire a postdoctoral appointee has been obtained, the research mentor has the option to conduct a search. Advertising the position and conducting a search is

optional. Individual unit approval procedures may vary so prospective mentors should check with their unit's administrative or business office.

2. Units should submit a draft offer letter to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs within the Office of Research via email to opa@uga.edu PRIOR to presenting the offer to the candidate. Template offer letters found here must be used when drafting the offer: <https://research.uga.edu/opa/>
3. After receiving approval of the offer letter the research mentor may then present it to the candidate. Once the candidate accepts the offer, units should submit an appointment packet to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. 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>. 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 is required unless a search was conducted for the original postdoctoral position. Therefore, it may be 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/research & teaching appointees who are transferring to another unit or starting a new postdoctoral position, or for previous scholars who are returning to UGA for a new postdoctoral appointment.

All postdoctoral research and research & teaching appointees 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 the UGA Environmental Safety Division.

Postdoctoral Research and 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 and Research & Teaching Fellows and 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/research & teaching appointee at this institution is five years. This limit is based on federal guidelines and the tenet that postdoctoral appointments are primarily for training, which has a natural duration. The term refers to the **total, cumulative** time spent at UGA as a postdoctoral research/ 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. However, strong justification will be required if five years at UGA exceeds ten total years of postdoctoral training. 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 Office of Postdoctoral Affairs; these are expected to be rare, are restricted to up to one additional year and will be approved only in cases with strong justification based on the need to complete additional training and not to complete additional work.

Appointing units should ensure that postdoctoral research and research & teaching appointees do not exceed the five-year term limit. Office of Postdoctoral Affairs will periodically review postdoctoral 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-day notice. Established positions that may be appropriate after a five-year postdoctoral 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. With appropriate permission, Senior Research Associates may act as Principal Investigators in submitting proposals for research funding.
- Assistant Research Scientist – this non-tenure-track research faculty position is analogous to the assistant professor position; appointment 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 appointees 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 appointees may be appointed to one of these non-tenure-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.

Termination of Appointment

Postdoctoral research/research & teaching positions are subject to the standard 180-day probationary period defined for classified staff, as described on the [Vice President for Finance and Administration Policies and Procedures webpage](#). A postdoctoral research/research & teaching appointee may be terminated prior to the five-year term limit with a minimum:

- ninety-day notice if the funding supporting a Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Associate ends;
- two week notice for failure to adhere to the expectations described above or continued unsatisfactory performance of the duties of the position following at least one warning presented to the postdoc appointee in writing;
- no notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated.

Any change in the funding that supports postdoctoral 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/research & teaching appointees 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 annually, 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

Effective December 1, 2016, Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Associates must be compensated a minimum annual salary of \$47,476. Training grants and fellowships administered through UGA must include a minimum stipend of \$47,476/year for Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Fellows.

For Postdoctoral Research/ Research & Teaching Fellow Adjuncts, the terms of the award will dictate stipend amount and any increases; these are outside the jurisdiction of the University of Georgia. However, Office of Research strongly suggests adherence to the required minimum stipend of \$47,476

for all postdoc appointees. In cases where the fellow adjunct stipend amount is less than this minimum, Office of Research expects the appointing unit to provide the difference.

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: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-17-003.html>)

Leave

Postdoctoral Research and Research & Teaching Associates 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/Research & Teaching Associates participate in UGA employee health insurance, subject to HR policies, whereas Postdoctoral Research/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 individual health insurance plan offered to UGA graduate students.

Retirement Program

Postdoctoral Research/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/Research & 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://hr.uga.edu/employees/retirement-other-savings-options/>

Other Benefits

International postdoctoral appointees should check with the University's Office of International Student, Scholar and Immigration Services (ISSIS; <http://international.uga.edu/issis>) 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/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 Office of Research 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/Research & Teaching Associates 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>

Dispute Resolution Policy: <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

	Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Associate	Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Fellow	Postdoctoral Research/Research & Teaching Fellow Adjunct
Term of Appointment	5 years max.	5 years max.	5 years max.
Compensation	Salary	Stipend	Stipend
Required Minimum	\$47,476/yr (100% EFT)	\$47,476/yr (100% EFT)	Set by sponsor with supplement by unit if under minimum
Income Tax Owed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income Tax Withheld	Yes	No	No
UGA MyID	Required	Required	Required
UGA Card	Required	Required	Required
UGA Parking Eligible	Yes	Yes	Yes
UGA Services (library, etc.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Background Investigation	Required	Required	Required
Right-to-Know Training	Required	Required	Required
Laboratory Safety Training	Required	Required	Required
Retirement Benefits	TRS or ORP (with employer match)	(none)	(none)
Health Insurance	Employee	Individual insurance offered	Individual insurance offered
Annual Leave	10 hours/month (unless on academic payroll)	—	—
Sick Leave	8 hours/month	—	—