

Postdoc Appointments: Beginning, Middle, and End

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RESEARCH MATTERS **LIVE**



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Agenda

Office of Postdoc Affairs

Beginning: Hiring

- Distinctions between positions
- Who does what in the hiring process
- Workflow:
 - Creation, Posting, Filling positions in UGA jobs
 - Critical hire approval, Offer letters, and postdoc application packet
- Benefits eligibility and rates
- Starting salary range

Middle: Continuation

- Annual review and raises
- Updated offer/term of appointment letter
- Transition to fellowship
- Mentorship and career development

End: Separation

- 5 year limit
- Options to continue at UGA
- “RIF” requirement?

Opportunities for Feedback



Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

Director: Shelley Hooks, AVPR, shooks@uga.edu

Assistant Director: Jess Farmer, opa@uga.edu

<https://research.uga.edu/opa/>

What we do:

- Advocate for Postdocs and their mentors
- Facilitate hiring and onboarding new postdocs
- Develop, promote, and enforce postdoc-specific policies
- Offer career development programming
- Maintain postdoc data
- Coordinate the UGA Postdoc Association

What we don't do:

- Initiate or finalize position request, post, or hiring actions
- Review critical hire requests
- Set UGA or USG policy
- Interpret employment law



What is a postdoc (at UGA)?

Technical Definition

- Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., D.V.M., Sc.D., M.D., PharmD)
- Assigned responsibilities are predominantly research and/or scholarship
no more than 50% formal instructional responsibilities
- Full time, 5 year limited term
- Preparatory for a full-time career in academia, industry, government or the non-profit sector.

TRAINEE, but also typically an employee



Hiring



3 Options for Postdoc Positions at UGA:

1 and 2: Postdoctoral Associates.

- Receive a salary for required services.
- Benefits-eligible employees (staff) of the University.
- Usually funded from UGA-administered grants or contracts

1. Postdoctoral Associate AD - research only (BCAT 471)

2. Postdoctoral Associate AC- research and teaching (BCAT 206)

3. Postdoctoral Fellows (BCAT 671)

- Receive a stipend for which *no service is required*.
- Funded from an external source (e.g., training grant or fellowship) either directly to the recipient or through a UGA account



	Postdoctoral Associate AD	Postdoctoral Associate AC
BCAT OneUSG Connect Job Code	471	206
Description	Employee; research duties only	Employee; includes both research duties and teaching as Instructor of Record
Term of Appointment	5 years max	5 years max
Compensation	Salary	Salary
Required Minimum	\$47,476 (100% EFT)	\$47,476 (100% EFT)
Income Tax Owed	Yes	Yes
Income Tax Withheld	Yes	Yes
UGA MyID	Required	Required
UGA Card	Required	Required
UGA Parking Eligible	Yes	Yes
UGA Services	Yes	Yes
Background Investigation	Required	Required
Right-to-Know Training	Required	Required
Laboratory Safety Training	Required	Required
Retirement Benefits	TRS or ORP (with employer match)	TRS or ORP (with employer match)
Health Insurance	Employee	Employee
Annual Leave	10 hours/month	10 hours/month (unless on academic payroll)
Sick Leave	8 hours/month	8 hours/month



Hiring: Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty supervisor – Establish duties and responsibilities, recruit, interview, provide offer letter.

Hiring Unit – Create, hire and manage the postdoc position. Initiate all actions in UGAjobs and submit Critical hire request.

Hiring Unit's Reporting Dean/VP Office – Approve all hiring actions in UGAjobs and route to OPA.

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs – Review and approve all postdoctoral position requests, postings (direct hire/internal and searches) and hiring proposals and ensure compliance with postdoc-specific policies. OPA acts as the “**Sponsored Office**” within UGAJobs.

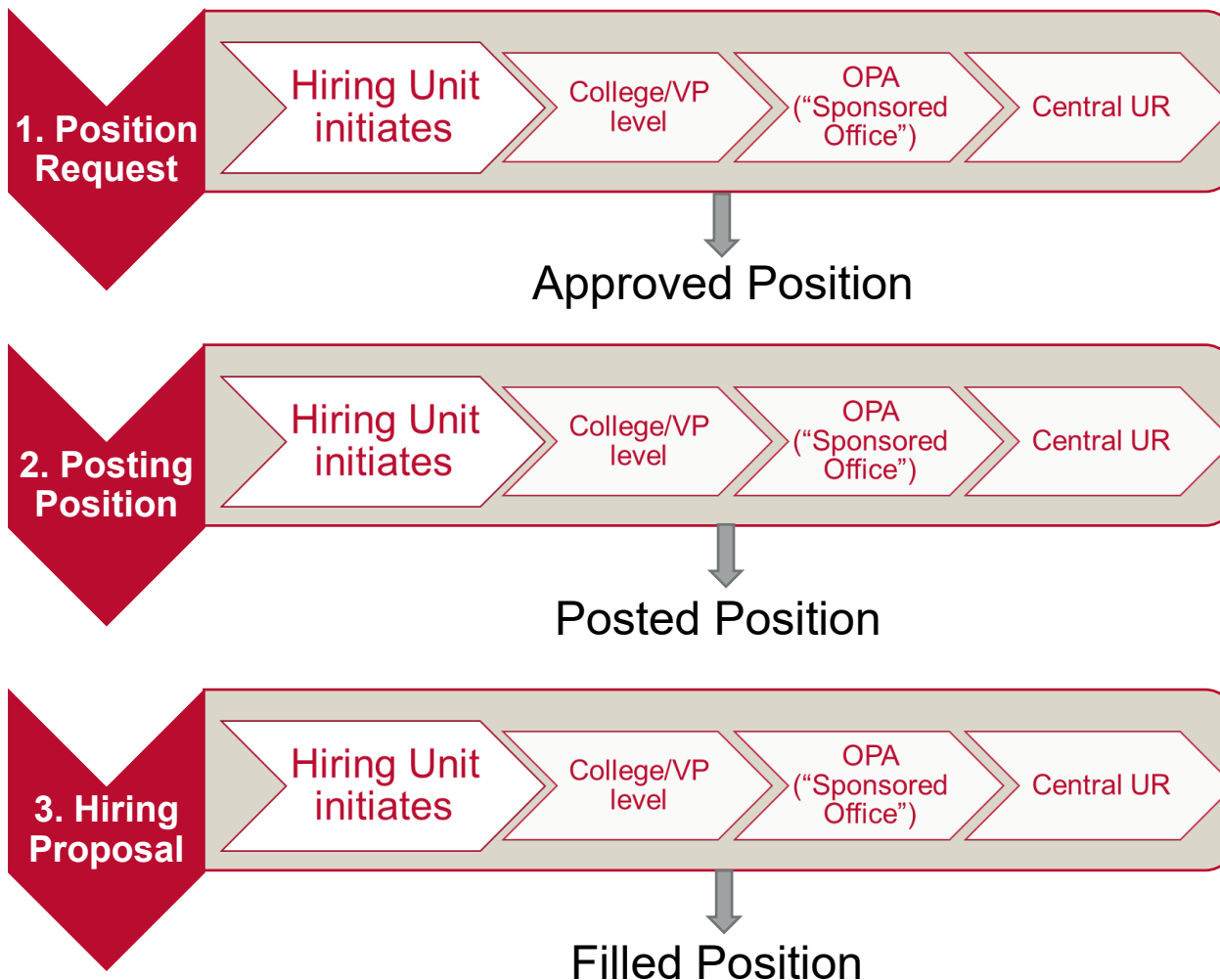
Central HR – Upon OPA's approval, Central HR finalizes all position, posting, and hiring requests and ensures compliance with all UGA and USG policies, state and federal employment laws.

Provost's Office – Critical Hire request review and approval.



Postdoc hiring process

UGA Jobs



Parallel Processes

a. Critical Hire Approval

b. Offer Letter

c. Postdoc appointment packet



Where to start Parallel Processes:

Critical Hire “Request to Fill”:

<https://hr.uga.edu/critical-hire>

Follow your unit’s procedure for routing to Provost’s office

Offer letter template:

<https://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/Postdoc-Offer-Letter-Template.docx>

Postdoc hiring packet cover form:

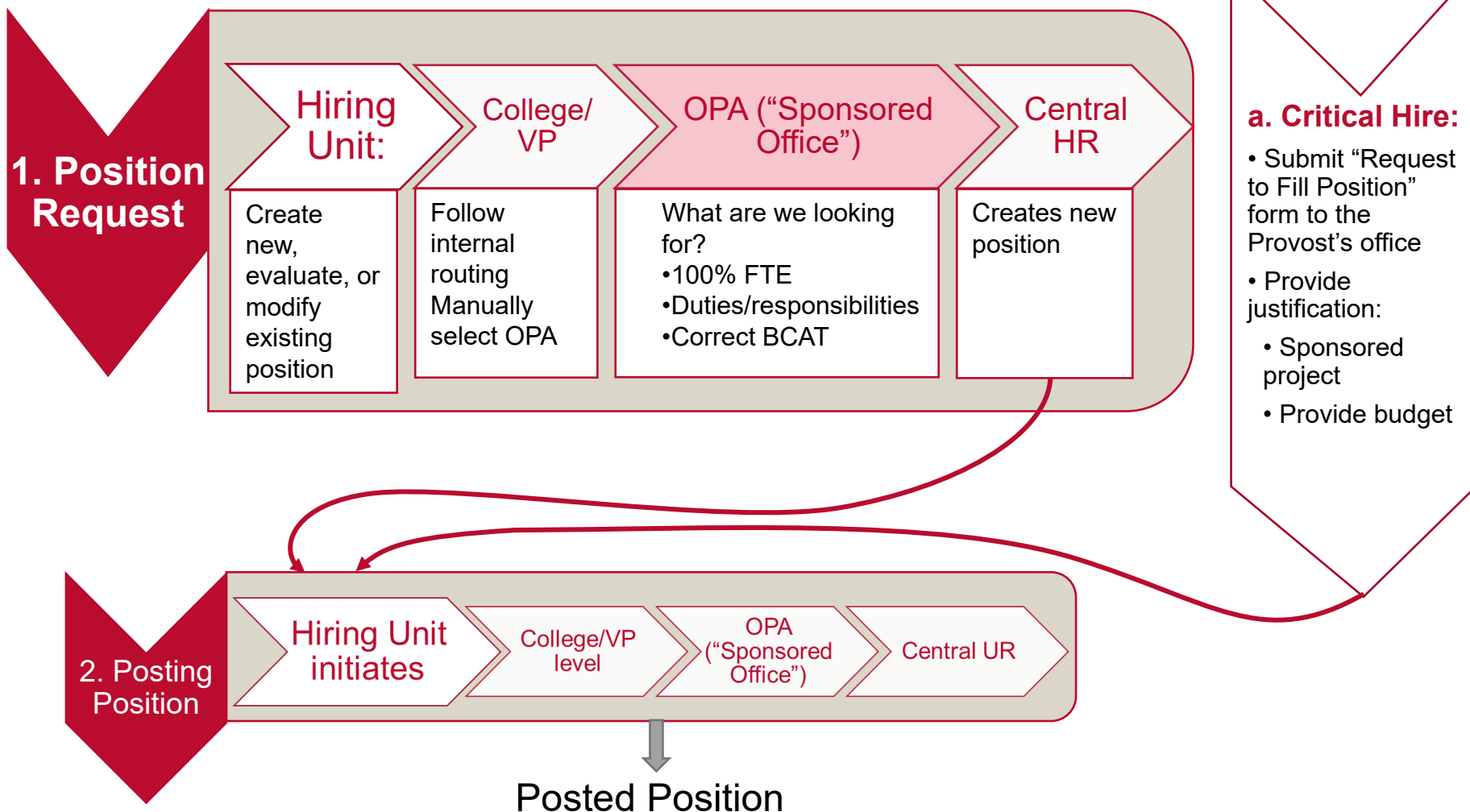
<https://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/pdf/Postdoc-Hiring%20Proposal-Cover-Form.pdf>



Postdoc hiring process

UGA Jobs

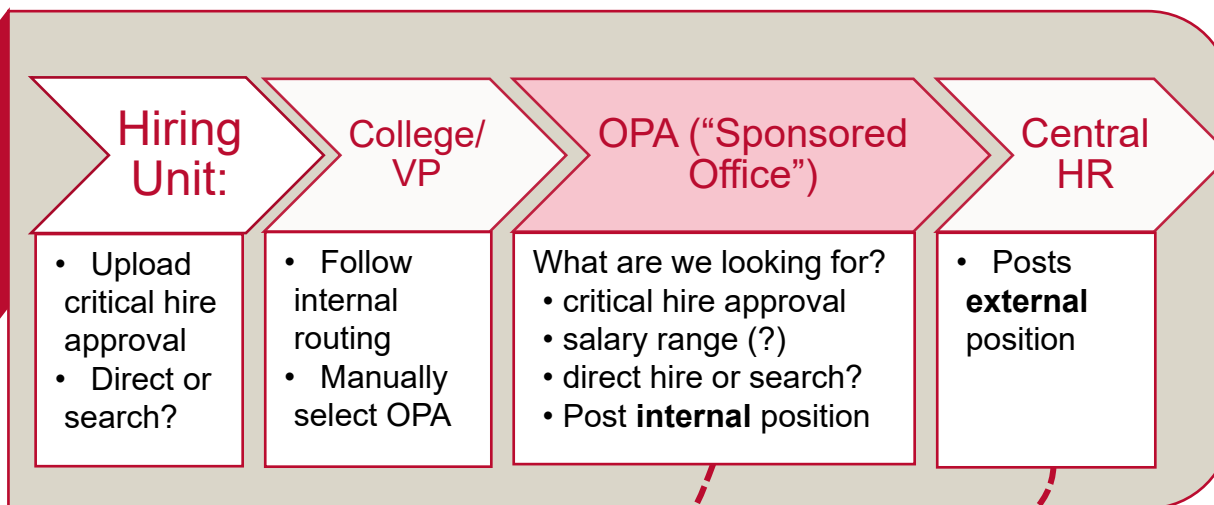
Parallel Processes



Postdoc hiring process

UGA Jobs

2. Posting Position



Parallel Processes

b. Offer letter

- Identify candidate
- Use OPA template:
 - Salary
 - Direct report
 - Term of Appointment, renewal
 - Conditions
- Submit to opa@uga.edu review

c. Postdoc packet

- cover form
- Signed offer letter
- Proof of degree
- CV
- If teaching: transcript to OFA, signatures

3. Hiring proposal



Posted Position



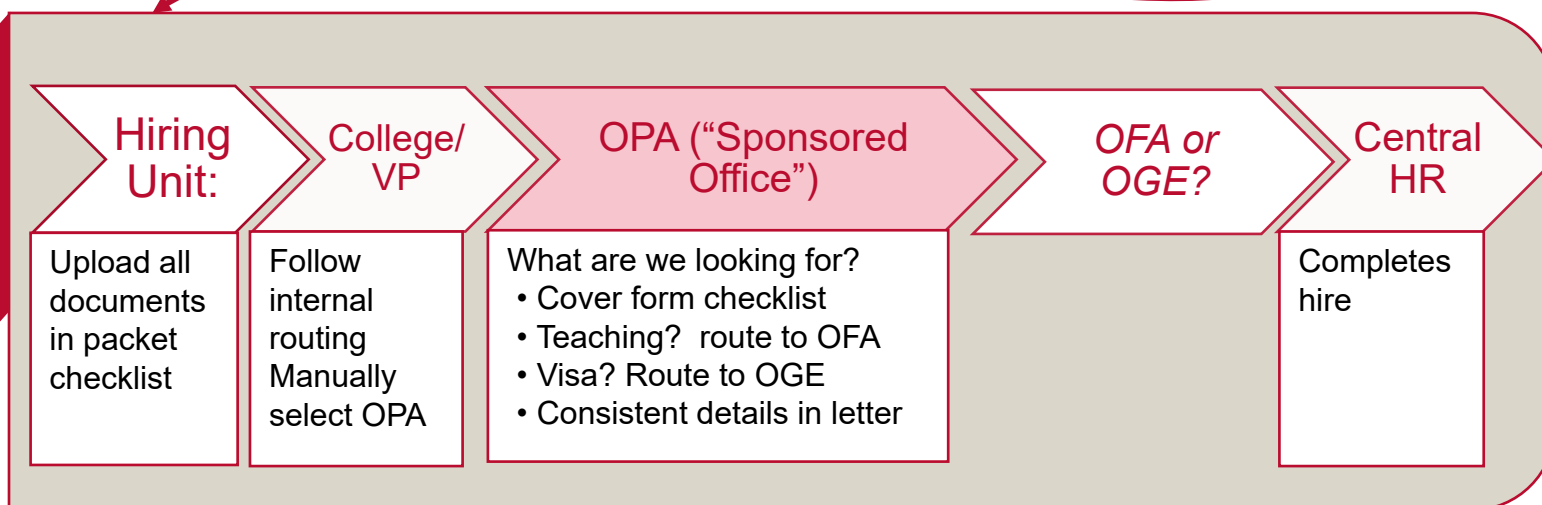
UGA hiring process

Parallel Processes

c. Postdoc appt. packet

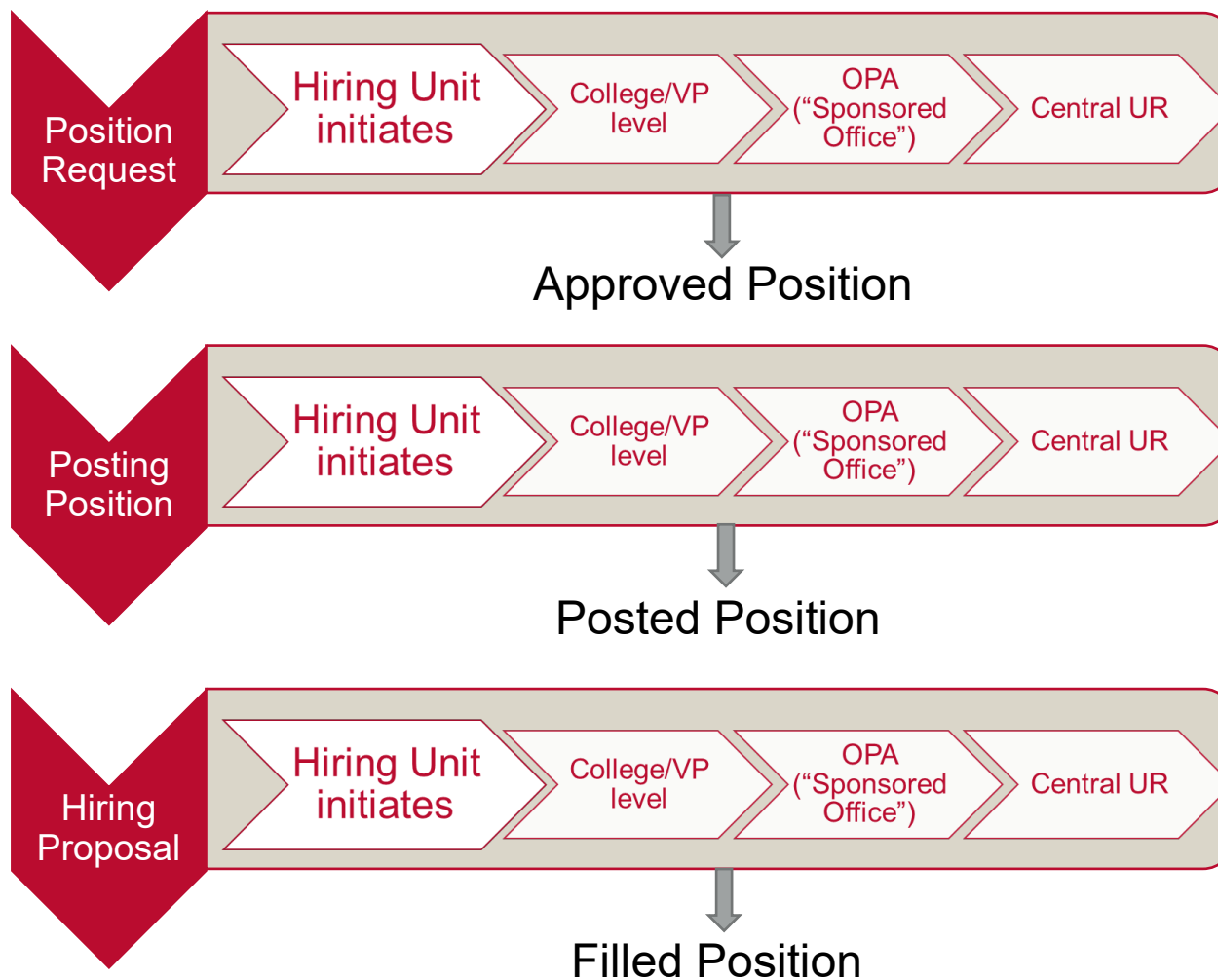
- Cover form, checklist
 - Signed (AC)
- Signed offer letter:
 - Salary range
 - Term length
 - faculty supervisor
- CV
- Proof of degree
 - Transcript (AC)

3. Hiring Proposal



UGA hiring process

UGA Jobs



Parallel Processes

Critical Hire Approval

Offer Letter

Postdoc Application



Benefits

Health Insurance

- Postdoctoral Associates participate in UGA employee health insurance
- Postdoctoral Fellows are not considered employees and may acquire their own private health insurance or may choose to participate in the individual health insurance plan offered to UGA graduate students.
- **NEW POLICY: Postdoc Associates transitioning to fellowship may MAINTAIN access to employee health insurance**

Retirement Program

- Postdoctoral Associates have the option of participating either in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia or an Optional Retirement Plan (ORP).
 - **5 year term limit should be considered.**
- Postdoctoral Fellows: No institutional retirement contributions can be made.

Leave

- Postdoctoral 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 leave payout upon separation (but may carry over to other position).
- Other aspects of the leave policy are the same as for all employees.



Budgeting Postdoc Benefits on grants

- UGA does not use negotiated, fixed fringe benefit rates for sponsored projects
- Fringe benefit rates are charged based upon the **actual costs** of the **elected** benefits
- Estimated fringe benefit rates are adjusted annually and include FICA, Retirement, Life Insurance and Health Insurance.
 - Previous Postdoc Estimated rate: 48%
 - Current postdoc estimated rate: 33%
 - Actual range: 20-50+%
 - Assumes ORP enrollment
- *A note about Peer and Aspirational Institutions*



Starting Salary

Starting Salaries:

- Minimum: \$47, 476
 - If a fellowship stipend is less than this minimum, the appointing unit must provide the difference.
- Recommended: Federal stipend rate
 - Current scale (Years experience)
 - \$53,760 (0)
 - \$54,144 (1)
 - \$54,540 (2)
 - \$56,712 (3)
 - \$58,608 (4)
- Require justification for >10% above Federal rate



Continuation



Continuation letters

Dear *CANDIDATE NAME*:

I am delighted to offer you a position in my laboratory as a Postdoctoral Research Associate *to join a multidisciplinary team of scientists at the University of Georgia engaged in the development of light-driven tools to study developmental neurophysiology.* This offer is for a **one-year** full-time appointment at an annual salary of \$XX,000 with a start date as early as XXXX. The possibility of renewal of this NIH-funded position for subsequent years will depend on your performance (judged by annual evaluation), the needs of the project, availability of financial support, and our mutual agreement.

- Unless a **firm end date** is communicated in writing, positions are by default continuous for the 5 year limit.
- Postdoc must be fully informed in writing **90 days before funding ends**.
- We strongly recommend annual continuation letters that clearly define the future availability of funds and/or upcoming end of term.



Continuation: Annual evaluation and raises

Annual Evaluation and Salary increases:

- Postdoctoral appointees are entitled to formal evaluations by their faculty mentors, at least annually
- Written, formative evaluations appropriately customized to long-term career development (e.g., IDP) are strongly encouraged
- UGA postdoc associates are subject to the UGA annual budget and salary guidelines for annual merit raises.
- Evaluations should be linked to **annual stipend/salary raises** when feasible based on funding.

Mid-year salary increases

Mid-year salary increase requests can be requested with justification:

- Equity
- New duties
- Catching up on previous skipped raises

<https://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/pdf/Postdoc-Request-for-Salary-Action.pdf>



Continuation: Training and mentorship

Mentor responsibilities

- Postdocs should directly report to and be supervised by a mentor who is a faculty member in the unit to which the appointee is assigned.
- Faculty mentors should provide a written description of assigned duties and expectations together with a description of the goals and objectives of the training program.
- Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the work and advancing the training of postdoctoral appointees.
- Faculty mentors should regularly and frequently communicate with appointees and provide performance assessment and career advice and assistance.

Grievance

Postdocs have access to the same grievance policy as regular employees.

<https://hr.uga.edu/employees/workplace-concerns/uga-grievance-disciplinary-review/>

Dispute Resolution Policy:

<https://hr.uga.edu/employees/workplace-concerns/uga-dispute-resolution-process/>

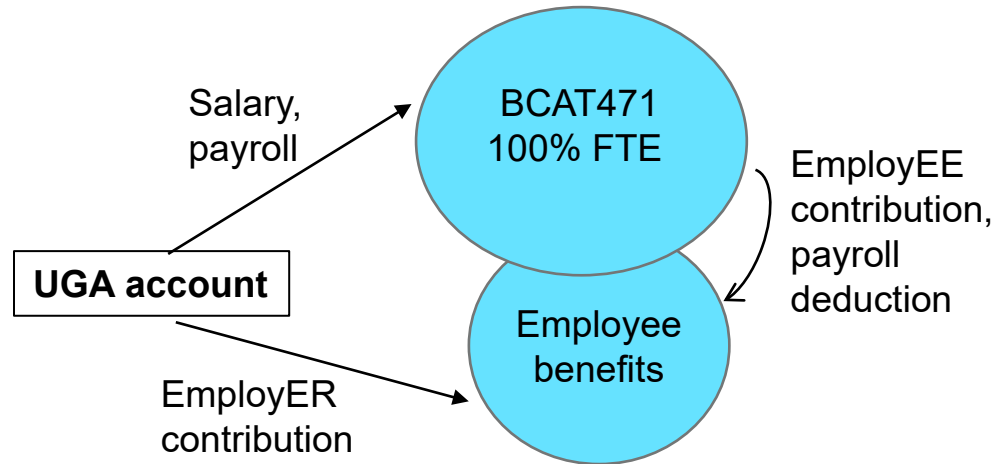


Continuation: Fellowships

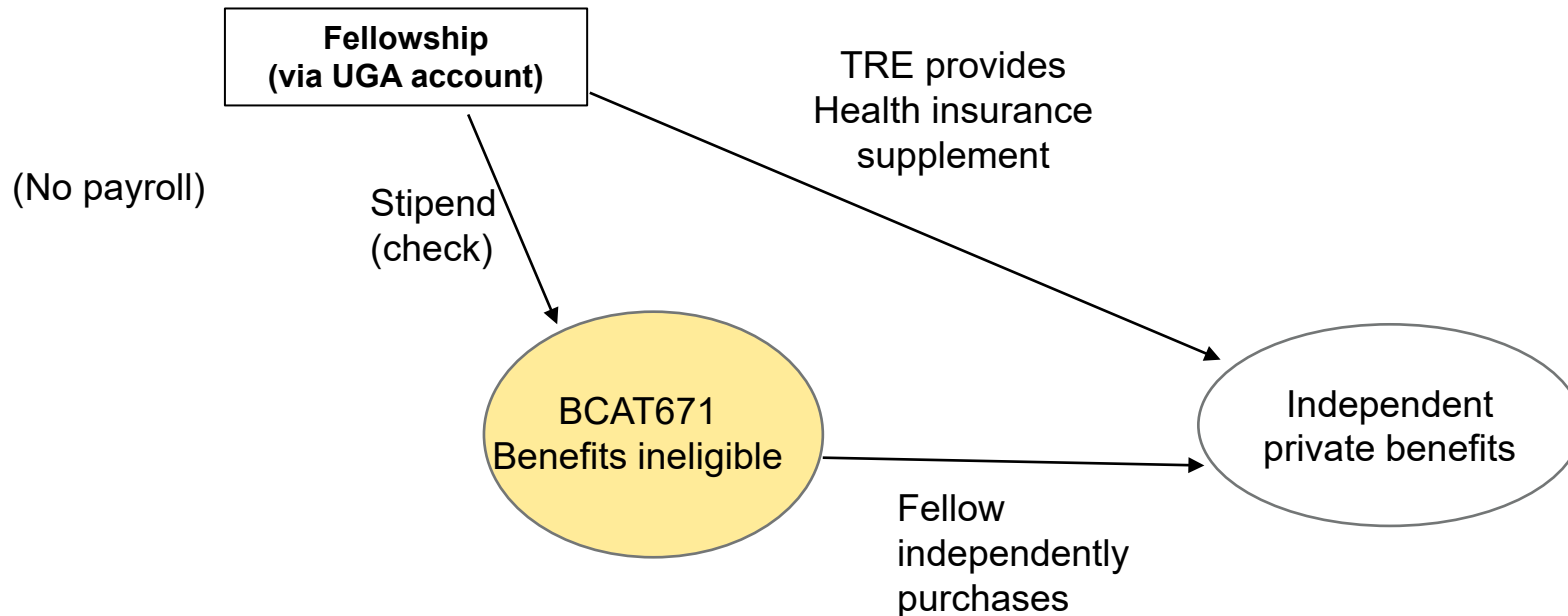
- Training grants and Individual fellowships bring prestige, recognition, and funding to the postdoc, mentor, and institution.
- These were unintentionally disincentivized in the past due to loss of benefits eligibility
- New mechanism to maintain benefits eligibility:
 - Postdoc Educational and Professional Leave SOP:
<https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/opa/SOP-PostdocEducationalandProfessionalLeave.pdf>
 - Educational and Professional Leave Request for Postdocs Form:
<https://research.uga.edu/docs/forms/opa/PostdocEducLeaveRequestForm.pdf>



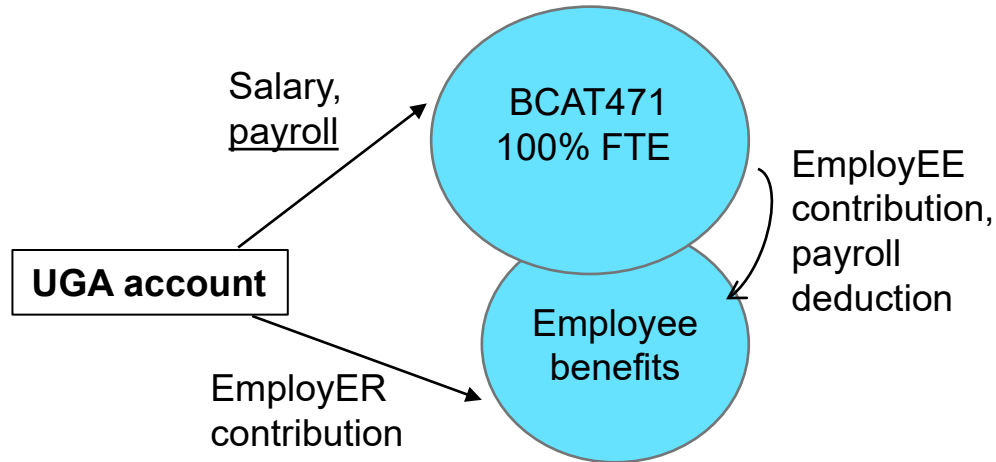
Postdoc Associates (Employees):



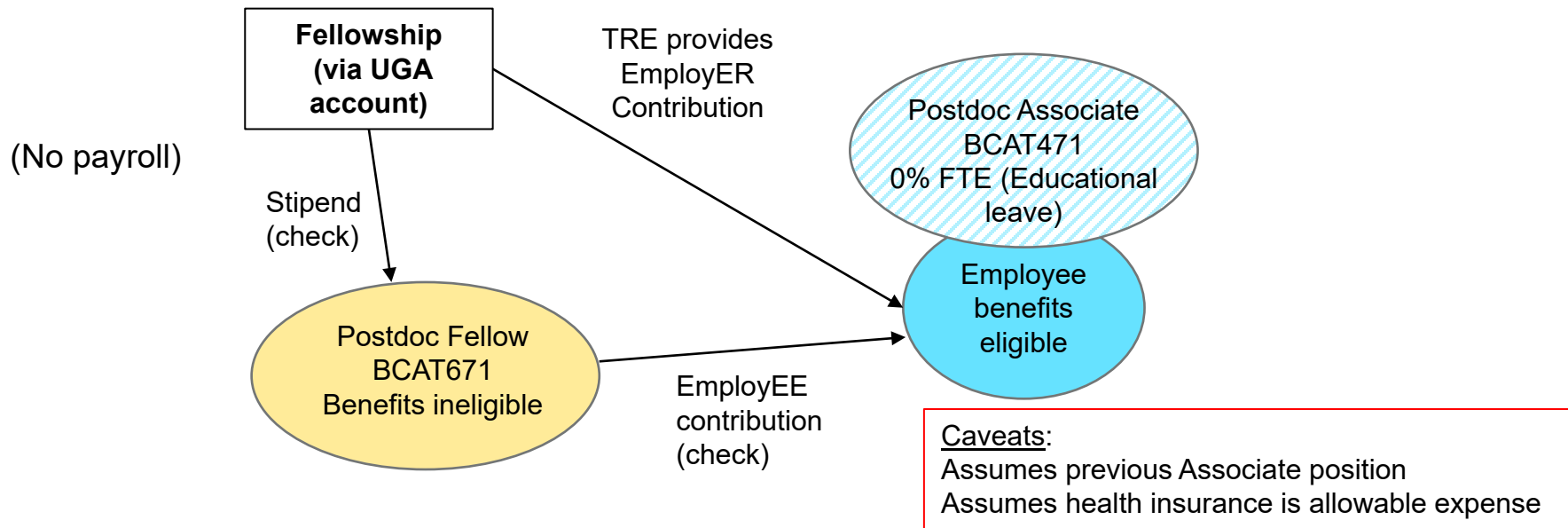
Postdoc Fellows (through 2020):



Postdoc Associates (Employees):



Postdoc Fellows (New policy):



Termination



Ending postdoc appointments

- **Reach 5 year limit**
- **Funding ended**
- **Poor performance or Disciplinary action**
- **Continue in new role at UGA**
- **Resignation**



Reduction in Force (RIF)

Required to demonstrate that employment is ending due to a business action. Protects against (suspicion of) bias or discrimination.

Within the 5 year term limit, postdoc positions are considered continuous.

If an individual postdoc leaves, but the ability to hire a replacement into the position remains, no RIF is needed.

- e.g.: postdoc leaves position to take a new job, hits 5 year term limit, terminated for disciplinary action

If the position itself ends, for example due to end of funding, RIF is required.

- Grant funded positions:
 - RIF must be reviewed and approved by UGA Central HR.
 - The mandatory 60-90 day notice to the employee starts after final approval by Central HR. Some relief of the mandatory notice can be approved if the employee was previously given clear written notice of a specific end of employment date.
- State-funded positions:
 - RIF must be reviewed and approved by the President of the University and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents (BOR).
 - The mandatory 60-90 day notice to the employee starts after final approval by the BOR.



Reasons for separation:

- **Reach 5 year limit**
 - Total, cumulative time at UGA as a postdoc limited to 5 years.
 - Justification required if five years at UGA exceeds ten total years of postdoctoral training.
 - Can be extended for medical or family leaves.
 - **no RIF required**
- **Grant funding ended before end of a clearly defined term**
 - Ninety-day written notice of the end of funding, even if offer letter indicates continuation is dependent on availability of funding
 - **RIF required to be approved, central UGA HR**
- ***Possible option (under development)***
 - *Fixed-term postdoc position with a rigidly defined term length*
 - *May avoid RIF requirement*
 - *May lose flexibility*



Reasons for separation:

- **Poor performance or disciplinary action**
 - Two week notice for continued unsatisfactory performance of the duties of the position following at least one written warning.
 - No notice in cases where ethical or compliance standards have been violated.
 - Coordinate with central HR. No RIF
- **Resignation**
 - Possible RIF, depends on cause
 - Taking a new position? End of funding?
- **Continue in new role at UGA**
 - No progression within Postdoc category
 - Must move to new faculty or staff position to remain at UGA



Options to Continue at UGA

Senior Research Associate – staff

- Within BCAT category “Research Professional”
- Most appropriate for standard advancement a postdoctoral scholar within the same research group.
- SRAs may act as Principal Investigators in submitting proposals for research funding.

Assistant Research Scientist – non-tenure-track research faculty

- BCAT category: “Researcher AC”
- Should be reserved for postdoctoral appointees who are on a trajectory for independent accomplishment.
- Appointments are within units (e.g., departments), not within research groups, and require approval by unit faculty
- <http://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/research/Research-Scientist-Appointment-Promotion.pdf>

Lecturer/Instructor –non-tenure-track faculty

- Most appropriate for postdocs who wish to pursue an academic teaching career.
- Appointments are within units and follow standard faculty search procedures.

A search is required unless a search was conducted for the original postdoctoral position.



Stay in touch, get involved, provide feedback:

Office of Postdoc Affairs: opa@uga.edu, shooks@uga.edu

National Postdoc Association: <https://www.nationalpostdoc.org/>

UGA Postdoc Association: <https://postdocs.uga.edu/pda/> , pdassoc@uga.edu

Postdoc Policy Faculty Advisory Group:

- Stephen Trent, Microbiology
- Bob Schmitz, Genetics
- Peggy Ozias-Akins, Horticulture
- Erin Dolan, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Mike Strand, Entomology
- David Garfinkle, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Vasant Muralidharan, Cellular Biology
- Jin Xie, Chemistry
- John Burke, Plant Biology
- Silvia Moreno, CTEGD-T32

Administrative Research Personnel listserv: Contact Jess Farmer opa@uga.edu to be added.



Links

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs webpage: <https://research.uga.edu/opa/>

Postdoc Portal: <https://postdocs.uga.edu/>

Postdoc policy: <https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/opa/postdoctoral-research-appointments.pdf>

A Practical Guide to Managing UGA Postdoctoral Positions: Instructions and FAQs: <https://research.uga.edu/docs/policies/opa/PostdocInstructionsFAQGuide.pdf>

Processing Postdoctoral Appointments in UGAJobs: A Guide for Unit HR Administrators: <https://14bqfg1p3mjhh4zo036hmx1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/documents/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2019/06/PostdocUGAJobsApptProcedures.pdf>

All Postdoc forms and policies: <https://research.uga.edu/documents/#1493841220281-ca14ab8b-d3be>



Postdoc Appointments: Beginning, Middle, and End

Thank you for supporting UGA Postdocs!

Questions?

