

# Tufts

UNIVERSITY

## POSTDOCTORAL HANDBOOK

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## Chapter One – Tufts University Postdoctoral Program

### 1 A. Mission of the Postdoctoral Program

The mission of the Postdoctoral program at Tufts University is to provide an environment in which Postdoctoral Scholars can broaden their research abilities and equip themselves with the skills necessary for a successful career in their chosen field. Postdoctoral Scholars at Tufts are obligated to carry out a research program to the best of their ability under the guidance of a research advisor.

Tufts University's web site at: <http://www.tufts.edu/> contains general information about the university's schools, programs, policies and activities. Information about policies that apply to postdocs can be found in:

- The Postdoctoral Handbook available at: <http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/postdoc/> provides policies and guidance which apply exclusively to Postdoctoral Scholars. There is also a postdoc website at: <http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/postdoc/> with additional information.
- Many of the policies in the Employee Handbook, which may be accessed at, <http://www.tufts.edu/hr/webcm/docs/handbooks/EmployeeHandbook.pdf>, also apply to Postdoctoral Scholars.

Postdoctoral Scholars may also be subject to additional policies that are specific for their host Research Advisors, Departments and Schools.

The policies and guidance in this handbook may be changed at any time and this handbook does not create a contract between the University and any Postdoctoral Scholar.

### 1 B. Tufts University

Tufts University, founded in 1852, is an independent non-sectarian university with degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in a variety of liberal arts and professional areas. Postdoctoral Scholars at the University may work on one of three campuses. The Medford - Somerville campus houses all undergraduate and some graduate programs, including the School of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, the Fletcher School, and the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. The Boston Health Sciences campus houses the School of Medicine, the School of Dental Medicine, the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences, the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts. The Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine is located on the Grafton campus, 40 miles west of Boston.

Each School within the University has a Postdoctoral Officer overseeing affiliated Postdoctoral Scholars. Tufts is a vibrant academic community that is enriched by the presence of these individuals. Scholars are vital to our research and educational community and contribute greatly to the success of Tufts. The administration is strongly committed to enriching Scholars' preparation as researchers within the university setting as well as in their future career paths.

## Chapter Two - Postdoctoral Role, Appointment, Promotion and Separation

### 2 A. The Role of a Postdoctoral Scholar

#### **General Overview:**

Postdoctoral Scholars carry out a research program under the guidance of a research advisor, who is generally a Tufts faculty member. Postdoctoral Scholars meet regularly with their advisors to apprise the advisor of the research results, discuss progress in the research, develop and troubleshoot approaches, plan upcoming work, receive direction and focus to the research, and to express mutual expectations.

The program aims to equip Postdoctoral Scholars with the skills necessary to become independent researchers in their respective areas of specialization. The research training experience at Tufts typically lasts up to five years, or until completion of six years of post-doctoral research in total. The Program is intended as a training program of finite duration, as opposed to a permanent position, that will enable Postdoctoral Scholars to become independent researchers.

#### **Position Requirements:**

Postdoctoral Scholars are persons who have earned a Ph.D., M.D., D.V.M., D.D.S., D.M.D., Ed.D. or equivalent doctoral-level degree and may have worked previously as a full-time researcher in a postdoctoral training position. Postdoctoral Scholars are engaged in research, scholarship, and training. This includes, but is not limited to, design and execution of scholarly research that may include laboratory experiments, attendance at national and international meetings, participation in undergraduate or graduate courses, including seminars and research workshops, and mentoring graduate students and/or undergraduates. In some cases, limited opportunities to participate in teaching may be available. Other opportunities include workshops related to career development. Advisors supervise all of these activities.

Since the Postdoctoral Scholar's experience is transitional to becoming an independent researcher, the Postdoctoral Scholar is expected to make his or her best effort to acquire the various skills necessary to advance his or her career in today's job market with guidance from the advisor. These skills include, but are not limited to:

- The ability to present research plans and findings in a cogent fashion, both in oral and written modes of communication. These skills may be developed by writing grant applications, reviewing manuscripts submitted for publication, writing research papers and reviewing articles, and regular presentation of the Postdoctoral Scholar's research at meetings and conferences held at Tufts and elsewhere.
- The ability to carry out mentored research with the primary objective of developing the Postdoctoral Scholar's research skills in preparation for a career. Enhancing intuitive ability and promoting independent thinking is a goal of Tufts' Program which may result in a Postdoctoral Scholar obtaining new research insights.
- The ability to establish contacts and network with colleagues pursuing related research agendas. Such contacts can lead to much fruitful collaboration and can often yield promising employment opportunities.
- A goal of the Postdoctoral Scholar's research is the dissemination of knowledge to the professional community. It is expected that research will be of publishable quality, and will be published in a journal appropriate to the field in a timely manner. A Postdoctoral Scholar

is responsible for writing his or her manuscripts, with guidance from his or her Advisor. The Postdoctoral Scholar is expected to participate in writing grant applications and reports that pertain to his or her research.

- As part of the research training experience, Postdoctoral Scholars are expected to participate in all formal and informal academic endeavors of the Advisor's research group and Department. These activities include, but are not limited to: group meetings; joint meetings with other groups having similar research orientation; journal clubs for in-depth discussion of recent primary research literature; and regular research seminars. These activities lead to an understanding of research group management and supervision of others.
- If the Postdoctoral Scholar's career aspirations include research and teaching in an academic setting, the individual may be given opportunities to present lectures in one or more classes.

Postdoctoral Scholars learn current research methods through direct experience working with an advisor with the same primary interest. The Postdoctoral Scholar's advisor is the frontline source of information and the one who sets the standards of conduct for efficient, ethical and productive research. Communication between a Postdoctoral Scholar and his or her advisor is of utmost importance and is regarded as both an opportunity and a responsibility.

At the completion of their training, Postdoctoral Scholars will have learned appropriate research techniques, been exposed to current research problems, and they will be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of research methods and developed the necessary portfolio of research accomplishments as assessed by publications, presentations and evaluative letters to be competitive for an independent position.

## **2 B. Titles**

1. Two different titles are used for Postdoctoral Scholars. The title, Postdoctoral Associate or Postdoctoral Fellow, is determined by the source of the funding that supports the Postdoctoral Scholar's salary as described below.
2. A Postdoctoral Associate is a Postdoctoral Scholar who is paid by the University, using funds derived from research grants, research contracts, training grants, or other funds available to the University.
3. A Postdoctoral Fellow is a Postdoctoral Scholar who has been awarded a fellowship by a public or private organization or institution external to Tufts. At the conclusion or termination of a fellowship, the Fellow may be eligible to continue his or her training as a Postdoctoral Associate.

## **2 C. Confirmation of Employment**

Postdoctoral Scholars will receive a letter confirming employment.

## **2 D. Conditions of Employment Activation**

Employment will be effective only after the following conditions have been met by the Postdoctoral candidate:

1. Completion of an application for employment.

2. Proof of completion of the Doctoral Degree - The candidate must show an official diploma or transcript (with translation into English if it is in a foreign language), or other acceptable proof of final doctoral degree conferral to the hiring department's administrator/manager. A copy will be sent to the Human Resource department for inclusion in the employee's record. If the final degree has not yet been formally conferred, but all the requirements have been met, a statement of completion of studies from the prospective Postdoctoral Scholar's home institution (Registrar's Office or Dean of Graduate Studies) is requested for conditional admission for twelve months. This statement should indicate the date on which all requirements were completed and the expected degree conferral date. If the degree is not formally conferred within twelve months, the Postdoctoral Scholar will be required to withdraw from his/her Tufts Postdoctoral position.

3. Proof of employment eligibility - The candidate must prove that he/she is eligible to work in the United States by completing an I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification and providing appropriate documentation.

4. Visa requirement for Non-United States Citizens - A candidate who is not a United States citizen must provide evidence of work eligibility at Tufts University that is valid for the entire period of employment. The University's International Affairs Offices, located on the Boston and Medford campuses, can provide information regarding H1, J1, and other non-immigrant visas. The sponsoring faculty member or Department will provide assistance in completing the appropriate visa application. However, the University generally will not apply for permanent residence on the candidate's behalf. The University will pay certain fees associated with visa applications. The employer is required to pay an anti-fraud fee and many, but not all, departments pay the H1-B visa filing fee. However, other fees in connection with the visa and its revalidation are the Postdoctoral Scholar's responsibility. Government regulations stipulate that J-1 visa holders enroll in insurance coverage which is provided through the university. The University's International Office can provide information regarding this coverage. For more up to date information on visas or to ask questions, please visit the University's International Affairs web site: <http://www.tufts.edu/med/about/offices/iao/> in Boston or <http://ase.tufts.edu/icenter/> in Medford.

5. Social Security Number - A United States Social Security Number (SSN) must be reported for all new hires. If the candidate does not have a SSN, he/she must apply for one at a local office of the Social Security Administration. Any employee who will be paid on the University payroll must have a Social Security Number or show proof that he/she has completed an application for that number.

6. Completion of Tax Withholding Information - An Employee's Withholding Allowance information indicates the number of federal (W-4) and state (M-4) withholding allowances claimed. This can be changed at any time in Employee Self Service. Taxation for non-residents is governed by specific regulations. These employees may also be eligible for tax treaties. Please see section 3E below.

7. Completion of Direct Deposit Authorization - Direct deposit allows the net pay to be deposited to a bank of choice, provided that the bank is a member of the Automated Clearing House. Payment through direct deposit is a condition of employment at the University.

8. Completion of the Tufts University Employee Background Summary /Self-Identification Information - This information is requested to meet Federal government reporting requirements.

## **2 E. Postdoctoral Scholar Orientation**

Human Resources Orientation - Postdoctoral Scholars are invited to participate in an orientation given by Human Resources, which includes an overview of Tufts and discussions topics such as employment policies, technology resources, Environmental Health and Safety, Tufts Police, identification cards, and parking facilities.

Postdoctoral Orientation - Postdoctoral orientations are held quarterly during the academic year to encourage Scholars to learn about policies that are specific to them, meet their colleagues and to learn about the postdoctoral program at Tufts.

Additional Orientations - Postdoctoral Scholars must comply with specific requirements including health evaluation, immunization or training that may be required for Postdoctoral Scholars who work with laboratory animals, are involved in human subject research, or are involved in work that could expose them to biohazards.

## **2 E. Length of Employment**

Employment at Tufts as a Postdoctoral Scholars should not exceed five years or until completion of six years of Postdoctoral research in total. A term may be extended due to unusual circumstances. Each School's Postdoctoral Officer will have additional information on this issue and is the only person authorized to allow extensions. The Postdoctoral Officer may also authorize part-time employment in unusual circumstances.

## **2 F. Separation**

1. Termination for performance reasons - A Postdoctoral Scholar may be terminated if performance is unsatisfactory. Usually, there will be a written communication discussing performance concerns and suggestions for achieving a satisfactory level of performance. However, the University reserves the right to terminate a Postdoctoral Scholar without such written review.
2. Resignation - If a Postdoctoral Scholar decides to resign, he/she should inform the advisor and the School's Postdoctoral Officer in writing and provide one month's notice.
3. Compliance with University Policies upon Separation - Under all circumstances, upon leaving employment, a Postdoctoral Scholar has an obligation to leave the research records and materials in a state that will allow continuation of the project and ensures compliance with all applicable policies.

## Chapter Three - Compensation and Benefits

### 3 A. Payday

Postdoctoral Associates are paid semimonthly. Payday is the 15th and 30th of each month or the previous workday if the 15th or 30th falls on a weekend or holiday. At the end of each pay period, participants can review deposit information indicating gross pay, taxes, deductions, and net pay in Employee Self Service. Depending on the source of funding, Postdoctoral Fellows may be paid as described for Postdoctoral Associates, they may be paid directly from their granting agency, or they may be paid by both methods. Postdoctoral Fellows who do not receive pay from Tufts will be considered employees for health insurance and other postdoctoral policies including intellectual property rights. Postdoctoral Scholars must work half time or greater to be eligible for benefits.

### 3 B. Compensation Levels

The Advisor, in accord with University guidelines, will determine compensation levels for Postdoctoral Scholars. The minimum amount will be tied to the amount supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-National Research Service Award (NRSA) for Postdoctorals with zero years of experience. Information is available at: <http://grants.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm>. Scroll down to NRSA Stipend Levels on this website and select the most recent year. Compensation will be adjusted if a Postdoctoral Scholar is employed less than full-time.

Compensation levels for Postdoctoral Fellows will be determined by the awarding body, but will not be less than the minimum, in U.S. dollars, for Postdoctoral Scholars with 0 years of experience. Compensation will be adjusted if the Postdoctoral Fellow is employed less than full-time.

### 3 C. Merit Increases

The advisor will determine pay increases for Postdoctoral Associates each year, following the University guidelines and schedule for merit increases and within any grant constraints. Merit increases are usually effective July 1 of each year. The awarding body will generally determine merit increases for Postdoctoral Fellows.

### 3D. Postdoctoral Scholar Review

Advisors/faculty mentors and their Postdoctoral Scholars should meet regularly to review research findings, discuss and plan future work and to assess progress. In addition to these regular meetings, each Scholar and advisor are required to meet annually to review research progress, performance, and career goals. A Postdoctoral Scholar Review Form is available on the HR Forms page under Performance Development Program resources to guide this discussion ([http://hr.tufts.edu/1171461280926/Human\\_Resources-Page-hr2ws\\_1176382993168.htm](http://hr.tufts.edu/1171461280926/Human_Resources-Page-hr2ws_1176382993168.htm)). The signed signature page of the review form must be returned to each School's postdoctoral office. If a Postdoctoral Scholar's job performance is unsatisfactory, this may be cause for termination of the appointment.

### 3 E. Tax Liabilities of U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents

Postdoctoral Scholars who are paid by the University are subject to federal and state taxes. Each employee has the opportunity to indicate the number of federal and state withholding allowances

when they complete a W4 at the time of hire or at a later date. Postdoctoral Scholars who are paid through individual or Institutional Federal Training Grants may be exempt from FICA (Social Security) taxes. The taxability of these fellowships will be reviewed at the initiation of each award.

### **3 F. Tax Liabilities of Nonresident Aliens**

A number of variables, such as country of origin, tax treaty terms (if any), or visa type are considered in determining the tax liability of nonresident aliens. Non-resident alien employees should contact the HR Service Center at 617.627.5811 and ask to speak with someone regarding this particular issue to obtain additional information or to discuss their specific taxation situations.

### **3 G. Benefits**

The benefits described in this handbook apply to Postdoctoral Scholars who work half time (17.5 hours per week) or greater. Employees who work less than half time are not eligible for benefit programs.

- **Health Insurance** - Postdoctoral Scholars are required to enroll for individual coverage in the University's postdoctoral health insurance plan, administered by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, a health maintenance organization that provides both routine medical and major medical insurance coverage. The cost of this health plan is provided at no cost to qualified Postdoctoral Scholars. The insurance plan will be waived for those Postdoctoral Scholars who can show evidence of adequate coverage by other plans. Coverage for spouses, qualified same-sex domestic partners, and dependent family members is paid for in full by the Postdoctoral Scholar through payroll deduction.

- **Dental Insurance**- Postdoctoral Scholars are eligible to participate in the Delta Dental Preferred Provider Option Value Plan. This plan includes in and out-of-network coverage for preventive care. Other specialty services are available from providers within the Plan network at a discounted rate. These Scholars pay reasonable rates for this coverage which is administered for the University by Crosby Benefit Systems. Postdoctoral Scholars are also eligible to receive limited dental health services through the Tufts University Undergraduate Dental School Clinic. Services are provided at no charge and include radiographs, oral examinations, prophylaxis, and emergency services. The Health Administration Fee for these services is provided as a no cost benefit to the Postdoctoral Scholar. All other treatment procedures through the Undergraduate and Graduate Dental School Clinics will be provided at the full fee, although those enrolled in the dental plan receive discounts on services.

- **Tufts University Health Care and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA):** Postdoctoral Scholars holding an appointment of twelve months or longer may contribute to an FSA. Postdoctoral Scholars must sign up during the Open Enrollment period each year, for the following calendar year. Flexible Spending Accounts allow you to set aside a portion of your pay on a pre-tax basis to pay for eligible medical, dental, vision, child care and elder care expenses. For additional information see the Human Resources website.

- **Tufts University 403(b) Retirement Plan** – Postdoctoral Scholars holding an appointment of twelve months or longer AND who pay FICA tax are allowed to contribute to the Tufts University 403(b) Voluntary Retirement Plan. Eligible Postdoctoral Scholars may sign up for the 403(b) Voluntary Retirement Plan at any time throughout the year. Enrollment is available

through Employee Self Service. When you log in and make your election or change your contribution, the election takes effect the first paycheck of the following month. You may elect to contribute an annual amount up to the current federal deferral limit.

- Sick Time - Nonexempt benefits apply. (See Employee Handbook <http://www.tufts.edu/hr/webcm/docs/handbooks/EmployeeHandbook.pdf>)
- Extended Sick Pay - Nonexempt benefits apply. (See Employee Handbook link above)
- Leaves - Nonexempt benefits apply. (See Employee Handbook link above)
- Unpaid Personal Leave of Absence - Under exceptional circumstances, a Postdoctoral Scholar may need to take an unpaid leave of absence. Such leave may be granted at the discretion of the Advisor, in consultation with the School's Postdoctoral Officer and Human Resources, whether or not the Postdoctoral Scholar has vacation or sick leave to his/her credit. For further information, see the Employee Handbook.
- Vacation - Postdoctoral Scholars are entitled to three weeks of paid vacation (15 days/105 hours each year) pro-rated for part-time and part-year schedules.
  - Vacation time is awarded on July 1, the beginning of the fiscal year.
  - Unused vacation may not be carried from year to year, nor will it be paid out upon separation from the University.
  - If a Postdoctoral Scholar is hired after July 1, the vacation award will be prorated to reflect a partial year. A Postdoctoral Scholar who begins employment on the first of a month will receive their vacation award that month. A Postdoctoral Scholar hired after the first will receive their award at the beginning of the next month.
  - If a Postdoctoral Scholar is transferred or promoted to another position in the university, s/he will forfeit their postdoctoral vacation award and follow the vacation policy applicable to their new status.

Scheduling vacation: All vacation schedules must be approved by your supervisor. Whenever possible, vacation time should be requested at least three (3) weeks in advance. Progress in your research and the scheduling of experiments (for laboratory-based scholars) may be considered when setting vacation schedules.

- Personal Days - Full-time employees receive two personal days (14 hours) per fiscal year (July 1 –June 30). Part-time and part-year employees receive pro-rated personal days based on their regular work schedule. These days must be used each year; they do not accrue. (See Employee Handbook <http://www.tufts.edu/hr/webcm/docs/handbooks/EmployeeHandbook.pdf>)

## Chapter Four - Postdoctoral Responsibilities

### 4 A. Conform to Established Policies and Procedures

Postdoctoral Scholars are required to comply with all established policies and procedures of the research group, Department, and University. These include, but are not limited to:

- the conscientious discharge of research responsibilities;
- conformity with ethical standards in research;
- participation in Responsible Conduct of Research training as required;
- maintenance of adequate research records;
- compliance with University standards and regulations governing laboratory practices including but not limited to the use of isotopes, chemicals, infectious agents, animals, biosafety, and human subject research if the Scholar is engaged in these activities;
- open and timely discussion with his/her advisor regarding possession or distribution of publications, materials, reagents, or records relevant to the research project, and any proposed disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications;
- collegial conduct towards co-workers and members of the research group;
- compliance with all applicable University policies;
- assurance that any work performed outside of the University does not conflict with the University's Business Conduct Policy or Intellectual Property Policy, and the Advisor is informed of such activities.

Postdoctoral Scholars should become familiar with the research policies that are posted on the Office of the Vice Provost website at: <http://viceprovost.tufts.edu/>.

### 4 B. Ownership of Research Data, Notebooks, and Reagents (applicable to postdoctoral scholars who are using university facilities in the conduct of their research)

It is the policy of Tufts University that all notebooks, research data, and reagents generated in Tufts University research groups are the property of the University. These materials must remain with the research advisor at the termination of the postdoctoral position.

Intellectual property rights are governed by the Tufts University Policy on Rights and Responsibilities with regard to Intellectual Property, which can be found at <http://viceprovost.tufts.edu/?pid=6&c=6>.

### 4 C. Communicate Research Results to Advisor

The Advisor is normally the frontline source of information and the one who typically sets standards for the conduct of efficient, ethical and productive research. Therefore, communication between a Postdoctoral Scholar and his/her Advisor is of utmost importance and should be regarded as both an opportunity and a responsibility. A Postdoctoral Scholar should meet regularly with his/her Advisor according to a mutually convenient schedule. These meetings should be used to apprise the Advisor of the research results, for the development and troubleshooting of approaches, to provide direction and focus to the research, to air concerns and conflicts, and to express mutual expectations.

#### **4 D. Publish Research Results**

One goal of Postdoctoral research is the dissemination of knowledge to the professional community. It is expected that the Postdoctoral Scholar's research will be of publishable quality, and be published in a journal or book appropriate to the field in a timely manner. A Postdoctoral Scholar is responsible for writing his/her manuscripts, with guidance from the Advisor. The Scholar should participate in writing grant applications and reports that pertain to the research. If a Postdoctoral Scholar working in a laboratory based research group fails to write up his/her results in a timely fashion, the Advisor may choose to do so, since publications are critical for continued funding.

#### **4 E. Participate in the Activities of the Research Group and Department**

As part of the training experience, Postdoctoral Scholars are expected to participate in all formal and informal academic endeavors of the Advisor's research group and/or the Department. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- group meetings;
- joint meetings with other groups having a similar research orientation;
- journal clubs for in-depth discussion of recent primary research literature;
- regular research seminars.

Postdoctoral Scholars may be encouraged to audit specific graduate courses to make up for gaps in knowledge or to expand expertise. Finally, Postdoctoral Scholars in laboratory-based research groups should be involved in training/mentoring junior members of the laboratory - graduate and undergraduate students and technicians - all under the guidance of the research Advisor.

#### **4F. Responsible Conduct of Research**

Postdoctoral Scholars supported by NIH training grants or fellowships or NSF fellowships are required to complete training in Responsible Conduct of Research (<http://viceprovost.tufts.edu/?pid=31&c=51>). To assist scholars in meeting this requirement, the Office of the Vice Provost offers this training annually. Postdoctoral Scholars who are supported by agencies requiring this training are responsible for completing the course during their first year. In recognition of the importance of research ethics, all Postdoctoral Scholars are encouraged to explore this training opportunity.